

Plain English award winner Jargon-free photo magazine

Issue 47

Photography for beginners

DISCOVER HOW TO...

MASTER LANDSCAPE COMPOSITION

- ✓ Create foreground interest
- ✓ Frame stunning vistas
- ✓ Balance the elements



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**7 WAYS TO FIX
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Welcome

Learn how
to enhance
macro shots
on **Page 30**



3 essential skills you will learn in this issue

01 LANDSCAPE COMPOSITION

Visit p12 to learn how to
capture stunning scenes



02 ENHANCE YOUR MACRO SHOTS

Discover editing techniques
for better close-ups on p30



03 ADD IN REFLECTIONS

Over on p34 we show you
how to mask in a reflection

Landscape photography is very popular, but sometimes our photos don't capture what we see. Fortunately, there are some easy techniques to instantly improve your landscapes. Go to p12 to discover some of the key composition secrets the pros turn to.

Meanwhile, starting on p20, we've prepared a guide to some of the most common lens-based errors and, of course, how you can prevent them affecting your photos. On p24, you'll discover how to capture an attractive portrait and use it as the basis for a greetings card. And if you're looking for a new camera, don't forget to take a look at our reviews starting on p44.

Matt Bennett

Features editor

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Get in touch with us... Ask questions, leave feedback on the magazine or share your shots via the following social sites...

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Learn how to
hold your camera



WHAT THE ICONS MEAN... Your quick-start guide to all the icons you might see in Photography for Beginners



Camaphone: Smartphones that are always with you



Compact: Small, low-cost and easy-to-use cameras



DSLR: Usually more expensive, but good image quality



Compact System Camera: Good image quality, lightweight



Shutterspeed: The time your shutter is open for, in seconds



Aperture: The depth of field of an image, as an f-number

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Common lens errors fixed



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SHARE

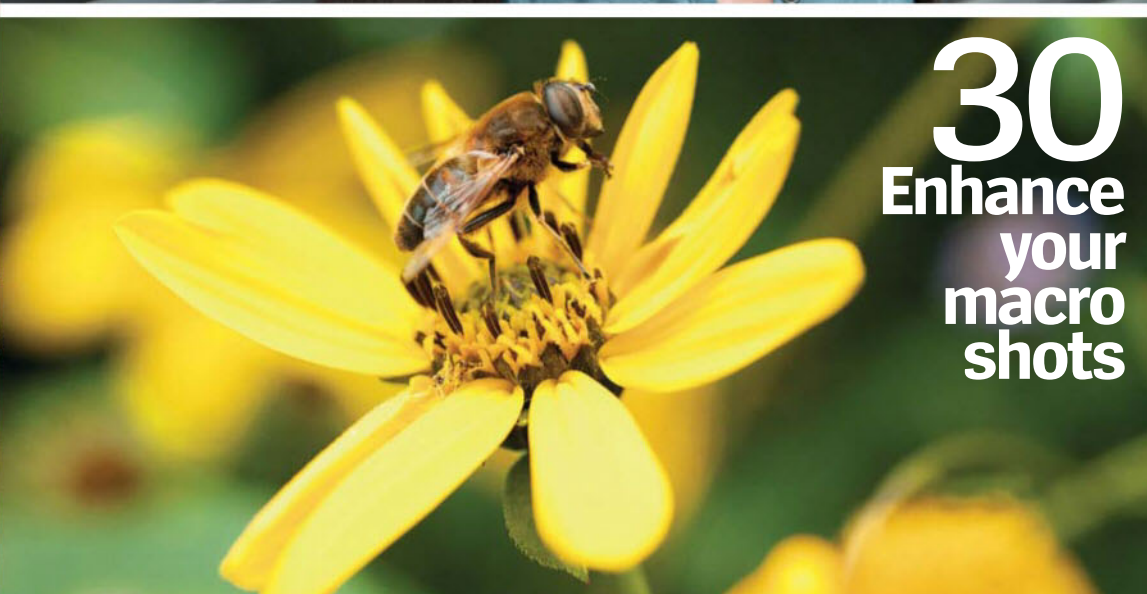
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Shoot a portrait for a card

For back issues & more go to...
GreatDigitalMags.com

Share your shots at...
photo4beginners.com
Or search for PFBMag on...





Your photos

Take a look at this month's incredible showcase of stunning images sent in by our readers

WINNER!

Reader: Silvia Li



Translucent

"I took this photo during a recent trip to Japan; the autumn foliage was amazing! I stood underneath the tree so that the leaves were against the sun to get that translucent effect."

Shot on: Canon EOS 6D with 100mm lens at f3.5, 1/250sec, ISO 200

YOUR PHOTOS

Readers' gallery



Reader:
Nick Jackson
The Tulip Staircase,
Greenwich

"I wanted to create an image that led the eye spiralling round the staircase to the top, and achieved this by lying on the cold floor and shooting directly upwards towards the glass ceiling. It took a few attempts to get the curves and angles as I'd hoped for."

Shot on: Nikon D7000
with 16mm lens, at f8,
0.6sec, ISO 100



Reader:
Bikash Basnet

Kingfisher

"The shot was taken at the Taudaha Lake, suburb of Kathmadu Vally, Nepal. The pond is a shrine for various locals as well as guest birds from Siberia and Tibbet. I shot it with a Canon EOS 7D Mark II and Sigma 150-500mm lens."

Shot on: Canon EOS 7D Mark II
with 150-500mm lens at
500mm and f6.3, 1/1600sec,
ISO 640



WINNER!

Reader:
Tom Watson

Tulips

"I find I take the most photographs between seasons because that's when everything looks the best through the camera"

Shot on: iPhone 5c



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Reader:

Felicity Crook

Title: It's a rollover!



Reader:

Lynn Smith

Title: Loch Voil

SHARE YOUR SHOTS

Here's how to show us your stunning snaps

Share on our social sites Join the Facebook, Twitter and Flickr communities

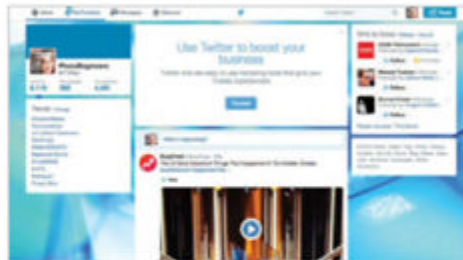
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You can showcase your favourite images by creating your own gallery page on our website. It's quick and simple to set up.

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Browse through all the different categories to be inspired by other readers' photos and get ideas of your own.

Read free tutorials

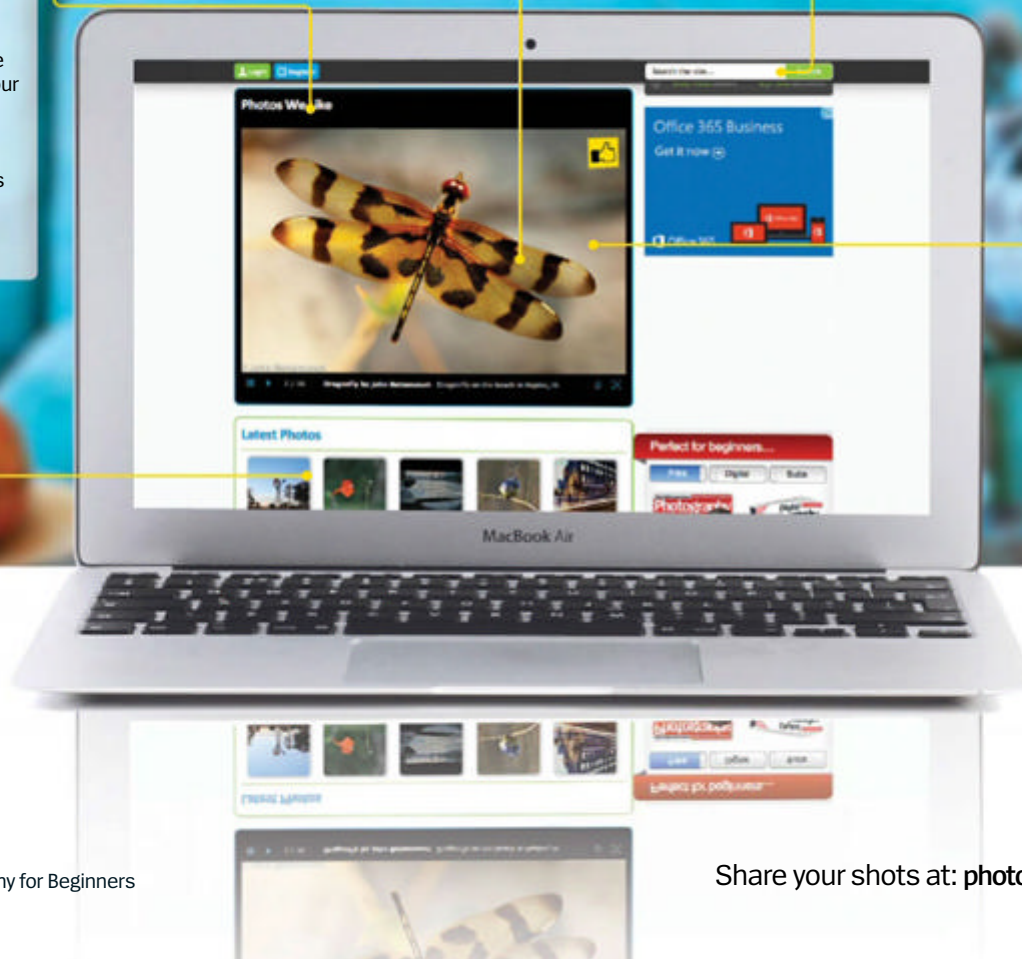
There are a wide variety of free guides online. Simply search for a subject here or click on the Tutorials tab to browse.

Enter the Face-Off

Your shots are entered into our Face-Off section and pitted against other people's – have fun watching your score rise!

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MASTER Landscape composition

Follow the advice in this easy guide and instantly improve your scenic shots in no time

Landscapes are high on most people's list of favourite subjects to photograph. A beautiful location and a camera to hand is, understandably, a winning combination. When you're out and about with friends and family for a day trip or holiday, it's tempting to think that all you have to do is point your camera at the stunning scenery around you, press the shutter button and be guaranteed an incredible photo – but unfortunately it's not normally that simple. Capturing great landscape images often requires much more than just turning up in a pretty place with a smartphone, CSC or DSLR, and so it is not surprising that many people end up disappointed with the images they've

captured, instead feeling that they somehow don't quite do the spectacular scene that they witnessed justice.

This is where we can help you. Over the next few pages, we'll talk you through the ins and outs of composing fantastic landscape photos, so that you can start to turn your scenic misses into hits straightaway. We'll start at the very beginning and go through the crucial rules that turn snap shots into stunning landscapes that you'll be proud to show to friends and family. Not only will you discover the best practice for great scenic images, we'll also show you some clever workarounds to help you achieve the best possible images even if you don't have the ideal kit to hand.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Great landscape images can be achieved simply by keeping a few key ideas in mind while you are out shooting. With enough practice, they'll become routine.



Keep it simple

Many professional landscape photographers try to eliminate as many elements as possible from their compositions, including only what they feel is truly necessary in the frame.



GOING LIVE

If you're using a DSLR or CSC, make use of the camera's Live View facility when shooting landscapes, as this can make composition and focusing easier

SHOOTING

Landscape composition

Learn how to compose eye-catching landscape images in-camera

Composition can make or break an image, so don't rush when framing your photo. A well-structured landscape should be balanced and eye-catching enough to draw you into the frame, which is why it's worth getting to grips with the traditional composition rules that we've outlined below. Familiarising yourself with what works will help guide you on your next shoot and also ensure you get better landscape images as a result. With that being said, don't be afraid to experiment with composition. Originality is key to getting your work noticed, so break a few rules and try composing your next image from a unique viewpoint or perspective, especially if you're shooting at a popular landscape location.

Rules of great composition



LACK OF STRUCTURE

Lead-in lines should always draw you into the photo and up to the focal point but in this image they lead you out, which means the subject is lost in the background



Top four rules to master

Discover the secrets behind a strong composition

Traditional composition rules have been followed by professional photographers for many years, which is why it's important for beginners to understand how they work and why you should use them. We've outlined four of the best here, which can immediately help you on your way to becoming a better landscape photographer.



Rule of thirds

Use your camera's grid lines, which divide the scene into thirds, and position your focal point on one of the intersecting points with the horizon appearing straight along either the top or bottom line.



Lead-in lines

Lead-in lines are designed to draw your eye further into a photo. It's important to always ensure they are leading inwards towards a focal point or the centre of the frame, as opposed to away.



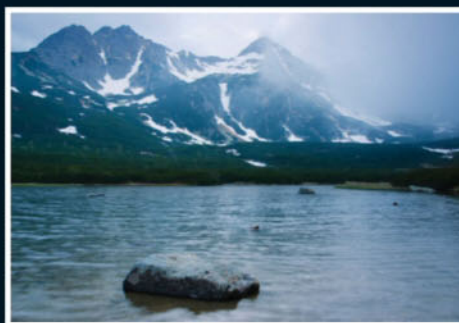
BALANCED COMPOSITION

The rule of thirds has helped to add structure to this image and emphasise the importance of the focal point within the background. The inclusion of the stonewall in the foreground also gives the image more of a three-dimensional, layered feel.



Framing the view

Look for unique natural or man-made frames to photograph a landscape through. Always use wide aperture, though, and ensure you focus on the landscape within the background.



Foreground interest

If there's a lot of detail in the background of your landscapes, balance the frame by including a subject within the foreground, whether it's flowers, rocks or even a man-made structure.

Photo hacks for great vistas

Handy tricks to ensure you get great shots on the go



Filter the frame

A quick fix for achieving good exposure in bright conditions is by positioning your sunglasses in front of the lens. It works in a similar way to an ND filter.



Find support

If you're caught short without a tripod on an impromptu landscape shoot and need to steady your camera, position it on a nearby secure structure, such as wall.



Steady your tripod

Affordable tripods can be a bit lightweight, especially when windy. Keep it steady by attaching your camera bag to the central column, which will help weigh it down.



Use self-timer mode

Use your camera's built-in self-timer to release the shutter when using slower shutter speeds. It will help eliminate all possibility of camera shake.

Frame your image

Now you know the rules, it's time to take your spectacular shot

We've taught you some of the key rules for shooting landscapes, such as using foreground interest, so now it's time to go out and get your shots. Let's think about the framing a little further, though.

The first thing to consider is what aspect ratio to use. This is the dimensions of an image that's worked out by comparing the width to the height, which is then displayed

as a ratio. 3:2 is usually what your camera will be set to, but some scenes will work better in other formats. The aspect ratio 5:4 is pleasing when working with foreground and background elements, but turning to a portrait composition with a 2:3 can completely alter a shot. A 16:9 panoramic view may also help you to fit more of the scene into the frame. You can change the

aspect ratio in your camera's menu, so it's worth taking time to work out what's best for the scene.

When you're at the location, take a look at its most alluring features and see how you can incorporate them into the frame, such as including a reflection in a river. Follow our step-by-step guide below to see how it's best to set up and compose for your shot.

Compose your landscape shot

Follow these steps when out shooting



1. Steady the camera

A tripod is an essential piece of kit for landscape photography, so don't leave home without one. Steadying your camera on a tripod will not only guarantee blur-free photos, but also help you to ensure the horizon is straight when you're composing an image in-camera. Simply extend the legs to an appropriate height and then check that the spirit level is on point. You can then attach your camera onto the top plate and secure it in place on the tripod head.



2. Compose on the screen

Strong composition is key, so take your time when framing your photo. Start by selecting your camera's Live View mode, which will offer a better view of what's in the frame. You can also activate the built-in grid on the screen via the menu, which is particularly useful when you're following the composition rules. Don't forget to adjust your lens focal length too – a wide setting (between 18-35mm) will enable you to fit more of the vista in your photo.

PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

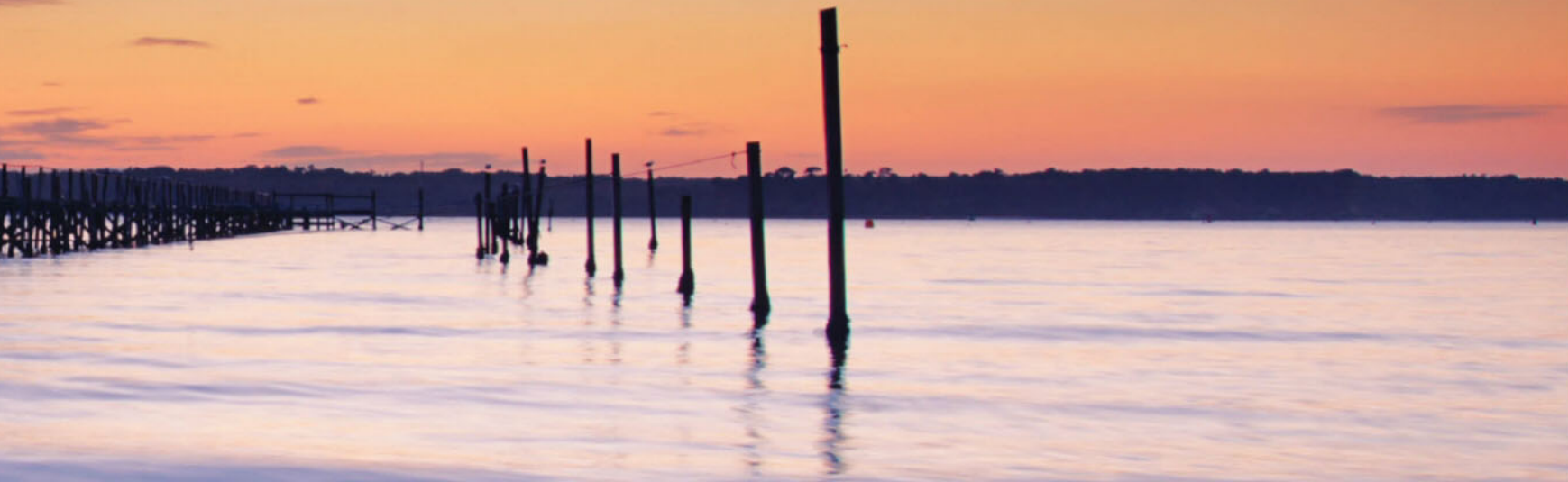


Planning ahead

Ensure you capture a great image by doing a little research before you leave to find the best viewpoints. Try to arrive a little earlier than necessary so that you're set up and you've worked out your composition before the light fades too much.



A simple setup and patience is all you need to take great shots. Simply assess your scene and take time to consider how to frame its elements



3. Adjust settings

Select the Landscape scene mode for the camera to take care of the settings, or switch to Aperture Priority (A or Av). Set a low ISO of around 200, and then select a narrow aperture, around f16, to increase depth of field. The camera will pick the correct shutter speed. It's likely a slow shutter speed will be selected for an even exposure, but provided you're using a tripod, images will still appear sharp, as only moving elements, such as water or clouds, will blur out.



If your camera has touchscreen capabilities you can position your focus point by tapping on-screen. Alternatively move the point using the D-Pad

4. Focus the frame

Finally, you'll need to set your focus point. Use the D-Pad, unless the LCD is touchscreen, and position your focal point around one third of the way up into the frame. This is generally the best focus point position for landscapes when you're using a narrow aperture, as it will maximise the increased depth of field. Once in place, half-depress the shutter button to lock focus and then release using a remote device or via the camera's built-in self-timer.

5 tips for holding your camera correctly

Perfect your photographer's stance and enjoy steady shots every time

Use both hands

If you're shooting with a compact, hold it with both hands; one gripping onto each side. However, be careful not to get your fingers in the way of the lens, as you'll smudge the glass or obscure the shot.

Support the lens

When shooting with a DSLR or CSC, use one hand to grip the edge of the camera, and place the other underneath the lens to support it. This also helps you zoom and adjust settings at the same time.

Stand correctly

To keep the camera as steady as possible, stand with your feet a shoulder's width apart and keep your elbows tucked in to your sides. Also keep your breathing steady and compose through the viewfinder.

Adjust the screen

To capture a shot from a lower angle, crouch down and rest your elbow on your knee for extra support. If your camera has a tilting screen, position it to help you frame the shot without straining your neck.

Use extra support

For added support, rest your elbows or the camera on a sturdy surface, such as a wall or fence. If you're shooting at night, use a tripod or shoot with flash to avoid blurry shots where possible.

“Stand with your feet a shoulder's width apart and keep your elbows tucked in to your body”

WIN!

SAMSUNG

A Samsung NX3000

Plus three lucky runners-up will each get a
Samsung 16GB EVO SD memory card



The Samsung NX3000 has a premium vintage design that will look stylish in any photographer's hands. With a 20.3MP APS-C sensor it captures amazing detail and vibrant colours. With this kit you can now take the perfect selfie using its 3-inch flip-up display and Wink Shot mode, which will take the shot in two seconds after it detects your wink. It's a helpful and fun option to play with, and you can share your shots via the camera's Wi-Fi option, send albums with MobileLink or tap

another NFC-capable device to transfer shots in an instant. The NFC-enabled Remote Viewfinder will even turn your smartphone into a remote control, letting you step back and adjust settings like shutter speed and aperture. The bundled 16-50mm lens boasts a power zoom option that makes zooming easier and to top off the impressive list of features, you can use the Home Monitor+ app that acts as a baby monitor! To find out more, visit www.samsung.com.

HOW TO ENTER:

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7 common **lens errors** and how to avoid them

Keep pesky photo problems at bay with our simple solutions

Whether you're shooting with a cameraphone, compact or DSLR, lens errors can creep up and ruin an otherwise fantastic shot. From unflattering distortion to unwanted blur, it can be difficult to know exactly what's causing the problem, let alone how to fix it. Usually the solution is

simple. It could just be a case of zooming in a bit more or adjusting a setting to get your picture looking how it should.

Over these pages, we will outline some of the most common errors that lenses can cause, and show you exactly how to avoid them on your next shoot. Most of our tips

can be applied to any type of camera, whether it has a fixed lens or an interchangeable one. However, if you do own a CSC or DSLR, we will also show you what to look for if you're planning to upgrade from your standard kit lens and help to clarify some of that confusing lens jargon.

1. Too much (or too little) depth of field

Adjust your aperture to control the amount of background blur

Aperture refers to the size of the opening in your lens. It is measured in f-numbers, with smaller f-numbers creating a wide opening, and larger f-numbers closing it down. As well as controlling how much light can enter your lens, it also affects the depth of field. Using a small f-number will create a shallow depth of field, blurring the background of your shot. This is great for portraits, as it isolates your subject in the frame, but when taking a landscape you'll want everything to appear sharp. To do this, just use a larger f-number to create lots of depth of field.



6 things to consider when buying a lens

Zoom or prime

There are two main types of lens. A zoom lens features a range of focal lengths, allowing you to zoom in closer to your subject. A prime lens features one fixed focal length but produces a slightly higher quality image.

Focal length

To fit lots into your landscape shots, you'll need a wide focal length (between 12-35mm). For close-ups of action or wildlife, you'll need longer focal lengths (between 70-300mm). Mid-range focal lengths are good for natural portraits.

Aperture

The f-number of a lens indicates its widest aperture setting. The lower the number, the more light is let in. A zoom lens usually mentions two different f-numbers, as the maximum aperture changes as you zoom.

Focusing distance

The minimum focusing distance of a lens tells you how close you can get to your subject before your shot will go blurry. A dedicated macro lens will have the shortest minimum focusing distance.

Stabilisation

Some lenses, particularly zooms, have built-in image stabilisation to counter any movement of the lens when shooting handheld. It's especially useful when using long focal lengths, as it is difficult to keep bigger lenses steady.

Portability

Lenses with really long focal lengths tend to be quite big and heavy, so they will add a lot of bulk and weight to your kit bag. There are some great compact zoom lenses available, though, but the smallest lenses by far are primes.

2. Wide-angle distortion

Zoom in for a more natural image

Using a wide focal length is great for fitting everything in your shot, but it can also cause distortion. This is particularly unflattering for portraits, as it will exaggerate everything that is closest to the lens, making your subject's nose look bigger than it actually is. For a more natural and true-to-life image, take a few steps back and zoom in to around 50-85mm. This will allow you to fit the same amount in the frame whilst shooting from a more comfortable distance from your subject and producing a more flattering image.

Perfect portrait

By using a longer focal length you can keep your subject's features in proportion and produce a more flattering image



Unflattering distortion

Really wide focal lengths can create a fisheye effect, making everything closest to the lens look much bigger than normal



Deceptive distortion

Using wide focal lengths to photograph interiors can be effective, as it stretches out the room making it appear bigger.

3. Low-angle distortion



Converging lines

Photographing architecture from a low angle creates distortion, but is unavoidable if you can't go higher

Tricks for keeping lines straight in your shots

If you photograph a tall building from close-up, you'll need to use a wide focal length and tilt your camera upwards to fit it all in. However, this will make its vertical lines appear to slope inwards, leaving the base of the building looking wider than the top. This can produce some quite dramatic results when shooting really tall structures, but for a more natural image you'll need to shoot from further away and keep the end of your lens parallel with the front wall of the building.



Fixing distortion

Some editing programs have tools for fixing low-angle lens distortion, but it usually means cropping into your shot

4. Blurry close-ups

Make sure your macro shots are crisp and sharp

If you move the end of your lens really close to your subject, you may see it go out of focus and appear blurry in your shots. This is because you have gone beyond the minimum focusing distance of your lens and it is struggling to lock on to something so close to

the glass. Some cameras have a macro mode that will help it hunt for close-up subjects, but you may still need to move back a little in order to take a sharp shot. If this isn't something you want to do, you could use a macro accessory.



Manual focus

If your camera's autofocus is struggling to keep close-up subject's sharp, you may be able to focus manually instead. Many lenses have a switch for selecting manual focus on the barrel.

Macro accessories

Add an attachment to get closer to your subject



Macro lens

Swapping your lens for a specialist macro lens with 1:1 magnification factor will ensure that your subject appears life-sized in your photos.



Extension tubes

Extension tubes are a little cheaper than a macro lens and fit between your camera and lens to reduce its minimum focusing distance.



Close-up filters

For an even more affordable macro lens alternative, screw some close-up filters onto the end of your lens to magnify your subject.



Use support

Another method for avoiding blurry shots is to secure your camera to a tripod or monopod to keep it steady



5. Shaky shots

Keep the lens stable for blur-free photos

When shooting handheld with a long focal length, it can sometimes be difficult to keep your subject at the same point in the frame. This is because cropping into the shot makes even very small movements of the camera more exaggerated, leaving you with a blurry image. If your camera or lens offers built-in image stabilisation, make sure it is turned on, as it will counter any camera shake to keep things steady. You can also try using a faster shutter speed or action scene mode to keep your shot sharp.



Handheld speeds

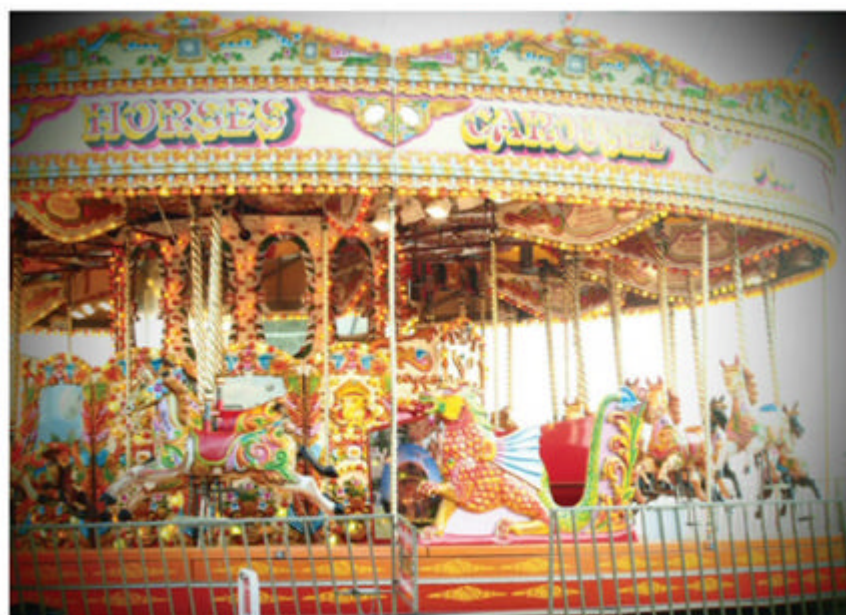
Match your shutter speed to your focal length to ensure a sharp handheld shot. For example, at 30mm use 1/30sec or faster and at 100mm use 1/100sec or faster.



6. Lens flare

Shield your lens from direct sunlight

Shooting into the sun, and particularly including it in the frame, can create lens flare. This will bleach out your shot and can sometimes cause distracting spots and smudges to appear. This is a result of the sun's rays hitting your lens at an angle and bouncing around inside it, but there is a simple solution to stop it. You could simply change your shooting angle, but to preserve your original composition, just attach a lens hood instead. Most lenses come with one in the box, or you could just shield the lens with your hand.



7. Vignetting

Prevent the problem of dark photo edges

You may notice that the edges and corners of some photos appear darker than the rest. This is known as a vignette, a common error that can happen when shooting with very wide apertures (small f-number) on some lenses. To get rid of it, simply use a narrower aperture (larger f-number). However, some people actually like vignettes, as they can help draw attention to the centre of the frame and give the shot a vintage feel. Most editing programs will even let you add a vignette to your photo.



Use a prime lens

Most prime lenses offer a wider maximum aperture than zoom lenses, which creates a much shallower depth of field and lets in more light.

FINAL PORTRAIT

✓ Why not make your next card extra special by transforming your own photography into a professional-looking greetings card?



WHAT YOU'LL NEED...

- ✓ A digital camera
- ✓ A desk or work lamp
- ✓ Editing software

WE USED...

- ✓ Canon 5D Mark II
- ✓ Sigma 50mm f/1.4
- ✓ Adobe Photoshop CS6

YOU COULD USE...

- ✓ Any digital camera with manual settings
- ✓ Adobe Photoshop Elements
- ✓ GIMP

SHOOT, EDIT & SHARE...

Create a personal portrait greetings card

Transform a portrait into a heart-warming gift

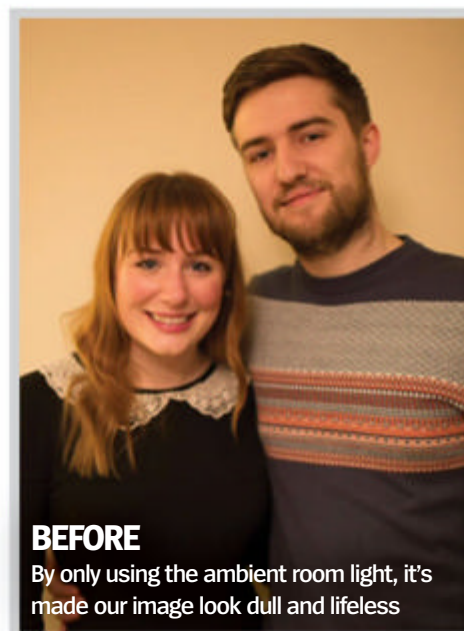
Whether it's for a birthday, anniversary, or Christmas, a personalised greeting card makes a wonderful gift for family, friends and loved ones. So why not make your next card extra special by transforming your own photography in to a professional-looking greetings card?

If this sounds a little complex then don't worry, as we'll show you how to do everything, from taking the photo, to editing on the computer, and then ordering your card. You don't even need to own a load of expensive printing or lighting equipment, as all of the items you'll need can most likely be found around your home already.

First on the list is a digital camera. Although in theory any type of digital camera will work, it's best to use one that offers you

manual control over key settings such as the aperture and white balance – a DSLR or CSC is ideal. Next you'll need a nice clear space in order to shoot your photo (a blank wall in your house will work well) and a willing subject. As the portrait will be taken indoors, you're going to need some form of lighting, too. This is where your humble desk lamp comes in. This handy little accessory is great for achieving studio-style lighting in a pinch. Finally, you'll need a piece of editing software, like Photoshop, so that the image can be spruced up and made ready for printing onto your greetings card.

For the sake of the tutorial we're going to be making a Valentine's Day card, though in truth this technique can be adapted to suit any holiday or celebration.



BEFORE

By only using the ambient room light, it's made our image look dull and lifeless

Shoot Learn how to capture stunning portraits indoors



Use a desk lamp

01 A common mistake when shooting portraits indoors is to simply use the ambient room light. This will make your photos look dull and lifeless. Instead, use a bright desk lamp (or a work light like us) to illuminate your subjects.



Switch to Aperture Priority

02 With your camera turned on, start by switching the camera's mode dial to Aperture Priority (displayed as A or Av). This mode will allow you to take control of the aperture value whilst the camera takes care of the shutter speed.



Increase the aperture

03 Set the aperture to the widest possible setting (smallest f/number). This will allow more light to enter the camera and will also allow you to achieve a shallow depth of field, helping to separate your subjects from the background.



Set the white balance

04 As you're using a desk lamp, you'll need to adjust your camera's white balance to compensate for its warm light. Press the dedicated White Balance button on your camera and select the Tungsten preset mode, often indicated by a bulb symbol.



Take the shot

05 Looking through the viewfinder, compose your shot – remember to do this in the portrait orientation so you can turn it in to a greetings card later! You'll want to make sure that you focus on the subject's eyes for maximum impact.

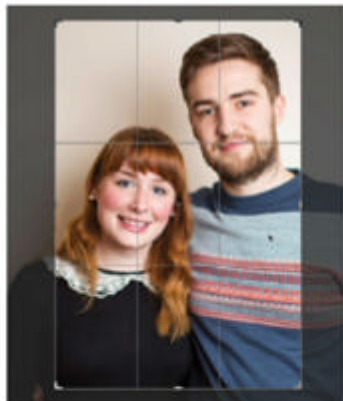


Review your results

06 Once you've taken a few shots, press the Preview button on the back of your camera and take a closer look at your images to make sure they are what you want. Press the Zoom button to check that they're all pin sharp and in focus.

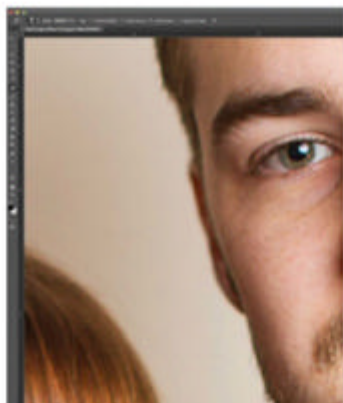
3 OF THE BEST...

Essential portrait editing tips



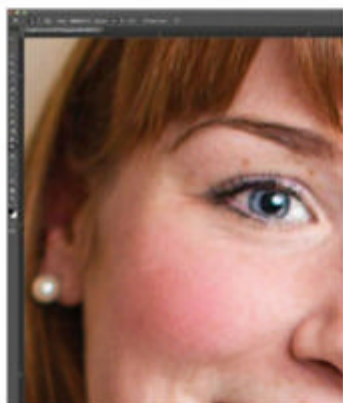
Crop your shot

Cropping in tighter to an image is an easy way to add impact. This can be done quickly by grabbing the Crop tool from the toolbox, dragging out the desired crop and hitting Enter.



Remove blemishes

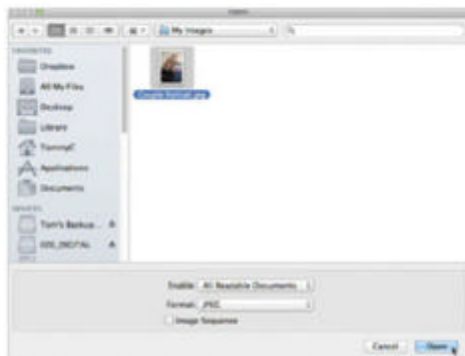
Removing blemishes from your subject's skin will greatly improve the final result. This is easier than you may think and is done by picking the Spot Healing Brush and simply brushing over the offending areas.



Brighten the eyes

Humans look at the eyes of a portrait first, so add some extra dazzle to them with the Dodge tool. Set the Exposure to 10% then brush over the whites of the eyes and iris.

Edit Perk up your portrait in Photoshop or Elements



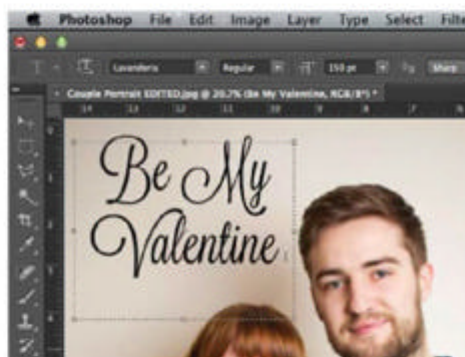
Open your image

07 With Photoshop opened up in front of you, go to File>Open. In the dialog box, locate your portrait photo, click on it to highlight it, and then click on Open. All being well, you should now see your image in the Photoshop interface, ready for editing.



Enhance the colours

09 To give the colours a little more zing, simply go up to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. In the dialog that appears, move the Saturation slider to +15, leaving the other slider as they were, then click OK when you're done.



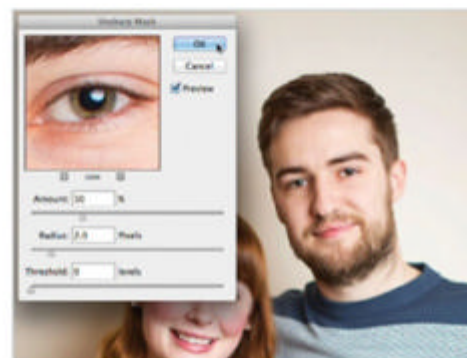
Add some text

11 Grab the Type tool from the toolbox then click and drag out a text box on to your image. Select your desired font from the top-left menu, then simply click in the text box and start to type the message for your card. Adjust font size from the top options.



Boost contrast

08 Start the editing workflow by going to Image>Adjustments>Brightness/Contrast at the top. In the window that appears, slide the Contrast slider to the right until it reaches a value of around 30. If you are happy with the results, click OK.



Sharpen your shot

10 To sharpen your image, head up to Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask. In the window that appears, set the Amount to 50, the Radius to 2.0 and the Threshold to 0. Ensure no distortion has taken place and then click the OK button to confirm the changes.



Save your work

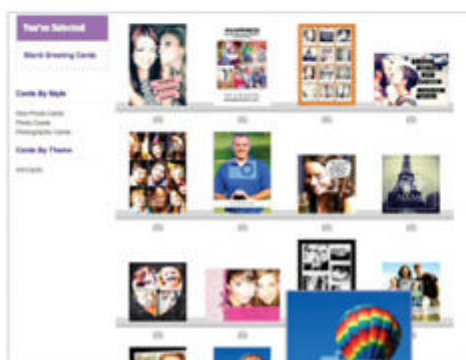
12 To save your work, ready for printing, start by going up to File>Save As. Rename your image at the top, then change the Format to JPEG and click Save. In the next window, make sure the Quality is set to 12, then click OK.

Share Turn your photo into a greetings card



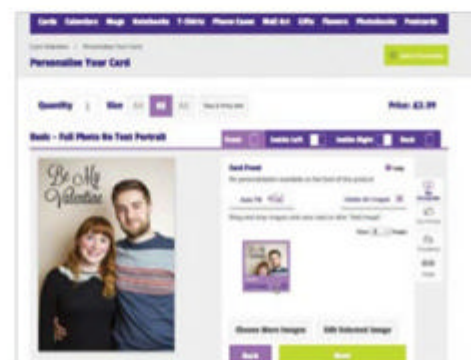
Find a service

13 There are a number of online companies that enable you to create and order your own greetings cards; we've settled for www.funkypigeon.com. When you're on the site, hover over Cards at the top and click on the General/Blank option.



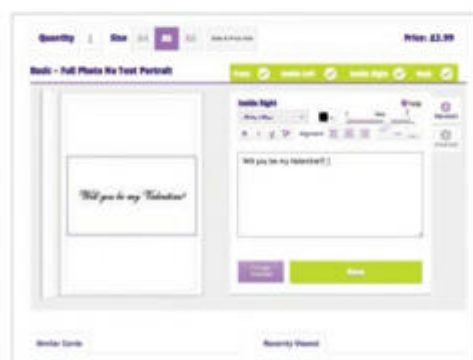
Choose a template

14 On the next page, scroll down until you find the Basic – Full Photo Not Text option, and choose it. Although if you want to be a little bit more creative with your card, you can always choose one of the other designs instead.



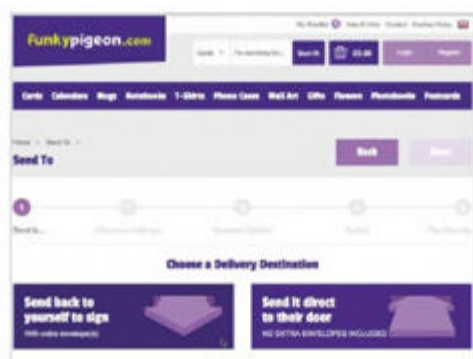
Add your image

15 Choose the option to upload an image directly from your computer, then locate your finished image and click Open. You should see a preview of your image – click the Add Image button to add the photo to your card template.



Finalise the design

16 Adjust the size of the card, and the quantity you would like to order, using the options above the template preview. You also have the option to choose to add a personal message to the inside left, right and/or back of the card.



Complete the order

17 Once you've finished adding the personal touches to your card, you can choose to send it to yourself to sign personally, or send it directly to the recipient's door. With this all out of the way, all that's left to do is to complete payment.

Personal message

Adding text in Photoshop is a great way to personalise your greetings card

Clean background

Make sure your shot has a clutter-free background to achieve a more professional finish

Soft light

For softer lighting, place a sheet of baking paper in front of the desk lamp

Eye contact

If your subjects are looking at the camera, focus on their eyes for maximum impact



Interact with your subject

It's important to make your models feel comfortable when you're taking their photo, so chat with them and make them feel at ease about the process.

Remove objects in images

Learn how to clean up your captures using the Clone Stamp tool in Photoshop

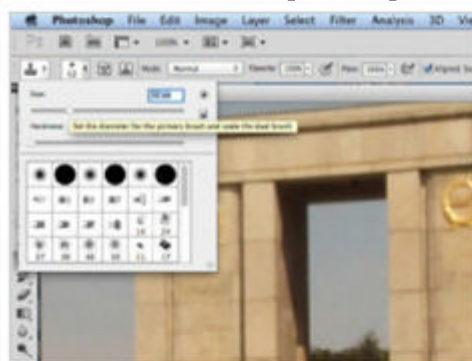
If you want to remove unwanted objects from your images or retouch a particular part of a photo, get to grips with the Clone Stamp in Photoshop or Elements. This clever tool is not only quick to master but can be used to enhance any shot, whether you want to smooth skin in a portrait, remove people from a landscape or just tidy up the background in your latest family snaps.

The Clone Stamp works by enabling you to copy, or rather clone, an area of an image and then paste that copy over another part of the picture. Simply select the Clone Stamp from the tool bar on the left-hand side of Photoshop's interface and then sample an area you want to copy. You can even adjust the brush size so that the cloned area will only affect the part of the image you want to enhance or remove, no matter how big or small.

Find out how to use the Clone Stamp tool today with our easy-to-follow steps below and start improving your shots in a matter of minutes.



Clone out people Get rid of passers-by with the Clone Stamp in Photoshop



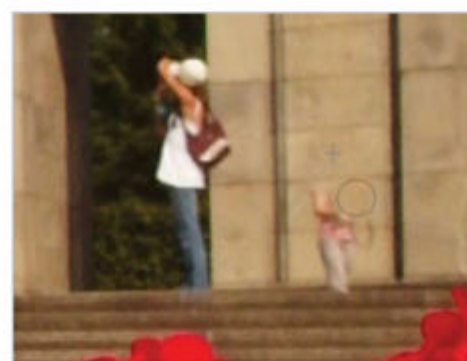
Adjust brush size

01 Open your image in Photoshop and zoom in close to the area you want to remove. Now select the Clone Stamp from the tool bar and adjust the brush size and edge softness. Keep the Opacity high at 100%.



Sample an area

02 Hold the brush over an area you want to clone, ideally either to the side or above the object you want to remove. Now hold down the Alt key as you select it to take a sample of the area.



Remove people

03 Place the brush over the area you want to replace and slowly begin clicking the mouse to remove the object. You can continually re-sample other areas and adjust the brush size again if necessary.

CREATE THE IMPOSSIBLE

www.photoshopcreative.co.uk

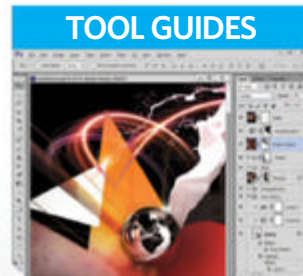


Photoshop creative

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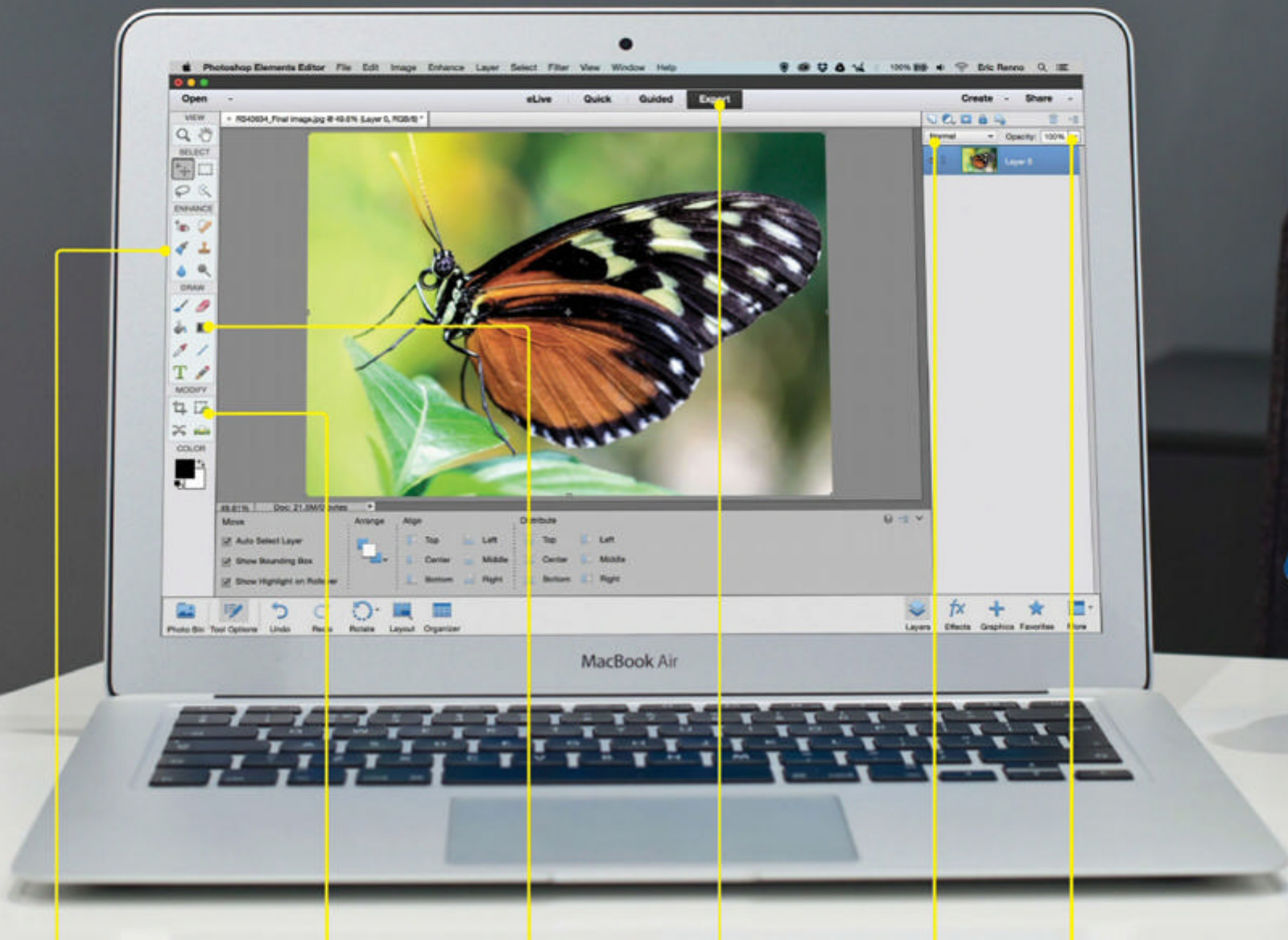
facebook.com/PhotoshopCreative



twitter.com/PshopCreative

EDITING

Enhance your macro images



Smart Brush

Elements has a wealth of Smart Brushes that can be utilised for a number of image types and they happen to work intuitively too!

Recompose tool

Resize and recompose your image without squashing or stretching your subject; great for resizing to print

Gradient tool

Gradients can be used for all manner of effects and designs and have a powerful editor to allow you to get it just right

Expert / Normal mode

Don't be put off by the name; entering Expert Mode will open up a whole new world of image editing

Blending modes

Altering the way that one layer reacts with the layer below it can change the feel of an image in an instant

Opacity

Changing the opacity of a layer will decrease or increase the impact of it, often with some dramatic and artistic consequences

WHAT YOU'LL NEED...

- ✓ A selection of images

WE USED...

- ✓ Photoshop Elements 13

YOU COULD USE...

- ✓ Photoshop Elements 12
- ✓ Previous Elements with some restrictions

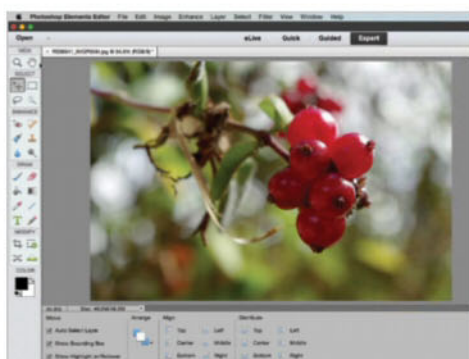
Enhance your macro images

Make your macro subject stand out with a few easy edits in Photoshop Elements



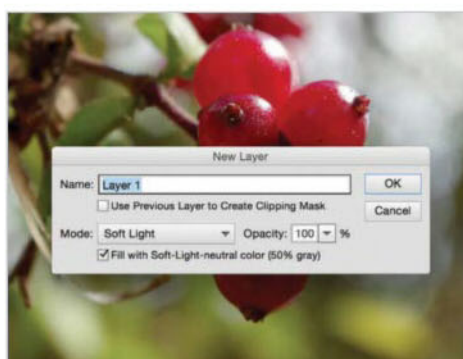
Add a vignette

Draw the eye into the frame with this easy vignette trick



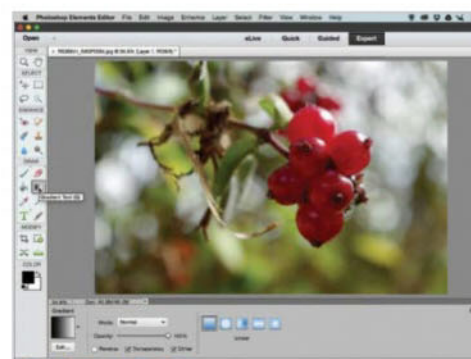
Expert or Normal mode

01 For more precise editing, use Photoshop Elements in Expert Mode. In earlier versions this was called Normal so don't let it worry you, you don't need to be an expert to use it. This will, among other things, open up the Layers panel to the right.



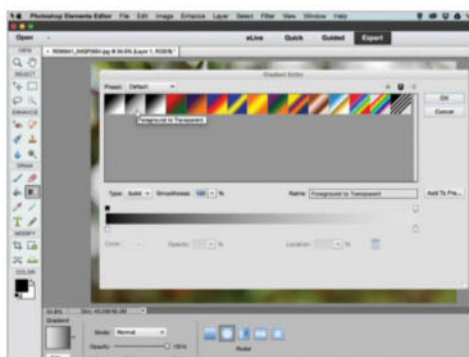
Create a new layer

02 Clicking the New Layer icon would make a new layer but by pressing the Alt key on a PC or Option key on a Mac and clicking it, you open a new dialog box. In here, set Mode to Soft Light and then tick the Fill with Soft-Light Neutral Color option. Click OK.



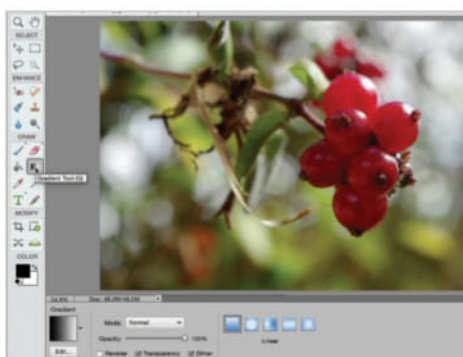
The Gradient tool

03 Because this layer is in Soft Light and is a neutral gray, it doesn't seem to have any affect. It all depends what darker and lighter tones are applied to it. Press D on the keyboard to reset the colours and choose the Gradient tool from the tool bar.



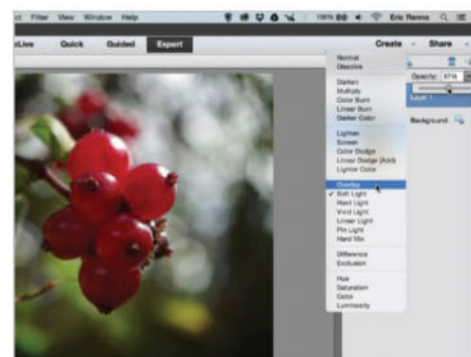
Choose a gradient

04 By default the gradient will be black to white. Clicking the gradient swatch opens up the Gradient Editor box where you can choose the second gradient, Foreground to Transparent. This will darken areas. Each image will differ, so experiment with this.



Draw a gradient

05 The gradient needs to be transparent to black, so click the Reverse tick box. You'll also want a Radial gradient, so select that here too. Click on the point of interest in your image and drag the line to the outside of the image and release the mouse.



Refine your vignette

06 The change is quite dramatic and you may want to adjust it. As this is a separate layer you can reduce the Opacity a little. Experiment with blending modes too; it's set to Soft Light at the moment but try Overlay, Multiply or even Vivid Light.

Enhance your macro images

[illegible]

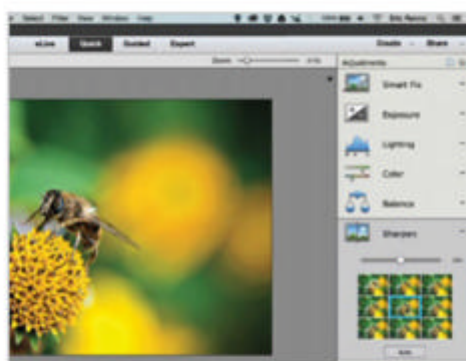
01 Auto Smart Tone can be found in both the Quick and Expert modes in Photoshop Elements 12 and 13. You can find it in the Enhance menu or by using the keyboard shortcut of Cmd+Alt+T on a PC or Cmd+Opt+T on a Mac.



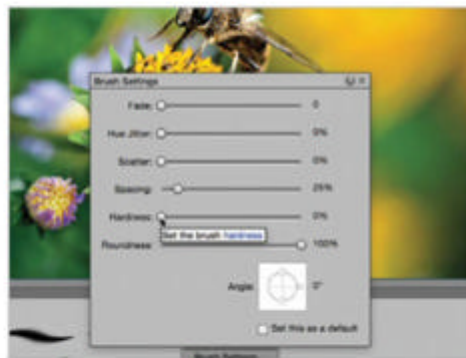
02 The dot that appears on your image is your 'joystick' and dragging over the image will adjust it in relation to the corner representations. Elements is analysing the tones under the joystick to make the appropriate edits.



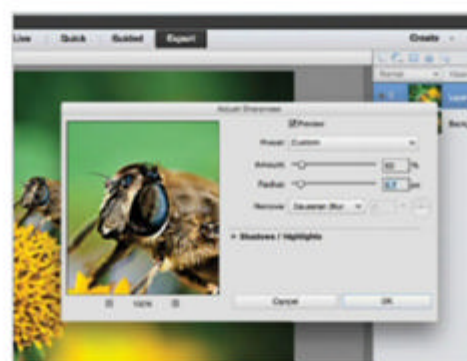
03 By default, Elements is set to learn your preferences in toning, so the more you use this tool the better because in theory, it will become automatic. To stop Elements learning from adjustments, click the menu button and uncheck.



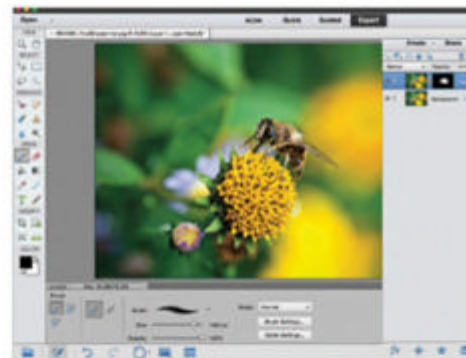
01 There's a great Sharpen option in Quick mode where you click on the progressive images to increase sharpening. If you don't want global sharpening, however, pay a visit to the Expert / Normal mode.



03 When you're happy with your sharpening, click OK. From the Layers panel, click to add a New Layer Mask. Press D and the X keys to make black the Foreground colour and then choose a soft-edged brush.



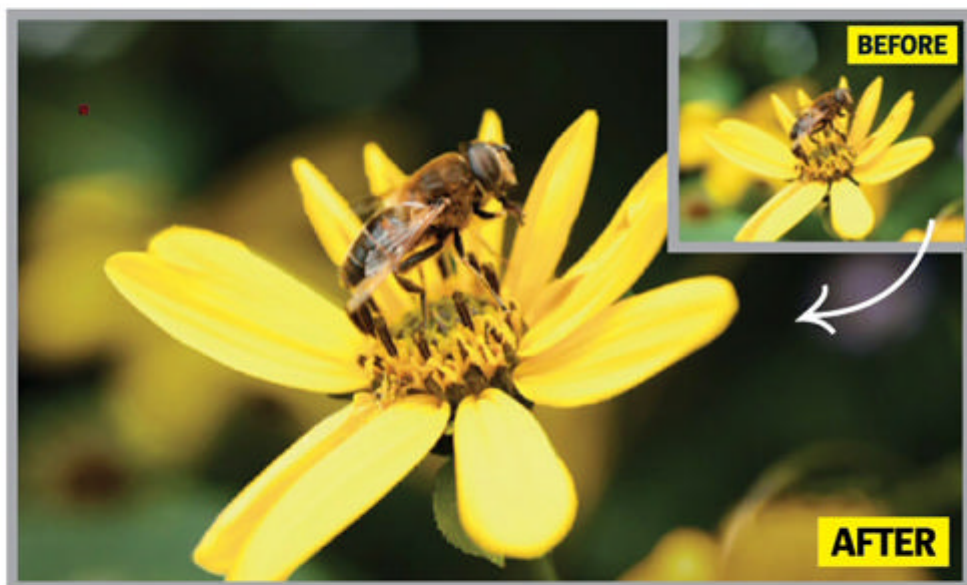
02 Copy the image by pressing Ctrl+J (PC) or Cmd+J (Mac) and then go to Enhance>Adjust Sharpening. Click the main image at the point you want to sharpen. Adjust the sliders with subtlety.



04 Painting black on the mask reveals what's below it. In this case you have the sharpened image on top, and by painting on the mask you're revealing the unsharpened image below.

Reduce colour

Make your subject stand out



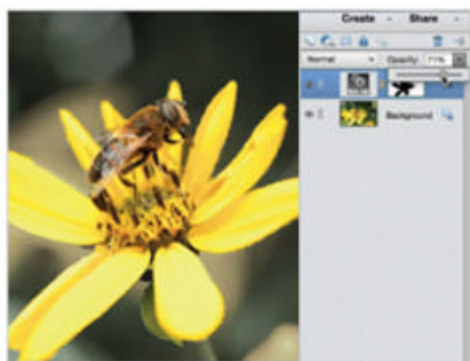
Prep the Smart Brush

01 With your image loaded and Elements in Normal / Expert mode, select the Smart Brush from the tool bar. Choose All Purpose and then Reverse Black and White. This is for selective colour but works here.



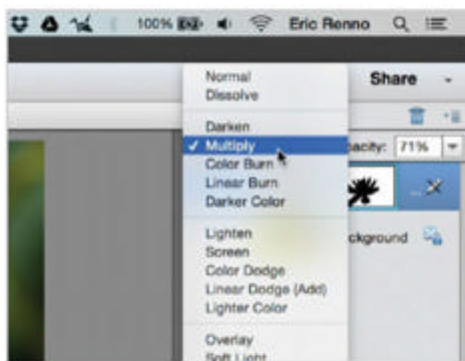
Select an area

02 Click and drag over the part you want to stand out. Elements should do a good job of finding the edges but if it needs help, press and hold the Alt/Option key to temporarily brush away the selection.



Selective colour

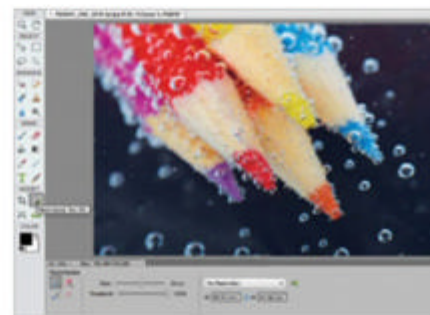
03 This looks great and you may wish to leave the image here. Bringing back some of the colour will look more natural, though, so in the Layers panel reduce the Opacity of the adjustment layer.



Blend it in

04 Experiment with the settings and the blend modes. Multiply is good for burning in the background for even more 'pop'. Because the Smart Brush uses a mask you can use white to paint back any details.

Recompose and keep detail



The Recompose tool

01 You may wish to resize your image, but Transforming it will cause some distortion. Elements has an amazing tool called the Recompose tool that really helps here. It can be found in the Modify section of the tool bar.



Areas to protect

02 Using the mouse, 'paint' on the image around the area you want to protect from distortion. The pixels aren't locked down here, but will be the last pixels Elements attempts to move during the resize.



Recompose the image

03 Use the handles around the outside of the image to resize and compose the image. You'll see some distortion but only in the areas that are unprotected. Once you're happy, click the tick and Elements crops and resizes.

EDITING

Add photos to reflective surfaces

Add photos to reflective surfaces

five
minute
project

Learn how to creatively combine two images together in Photoshop for a fun and artistic effect



Get in position

If you're photographing sunglasses for the purpose of this tutorial, take the shot at a slight angle from the side to get more realistic reflection results.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED...

- ✓ Two start images
- ✓ Editing software

WE USED...

- ✓ Photoshop CS5

YOU COULD USE...

- ✓ Photoshop CS/CC
- ✓ Adobe Elements

AFTER



Get creative with your recent captures by presenting them in a unique and original way. In this tutorial, you'll learn how to create an artistic composite image like ours in Photoshop, although the same effect can be achieved in Elements. Combining two images together may seem like a complex editing task, but it's actually relatively simple when you follow the steps outlined below.

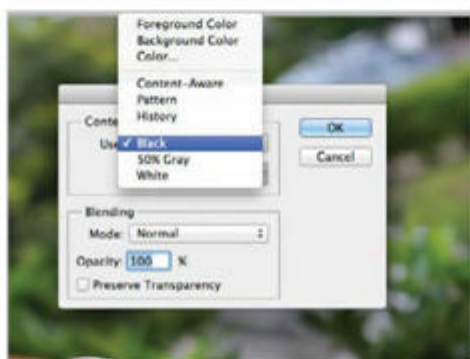
Although we've used holiday-themed photos for our creative reflection shot, you can choose any two starting photos you think would work well together. You don't even need to stick to sunglasses; other images of reflective surfaces can work just as well, including windows and wine glasses.

In Photoshop, we'll start by showing you how to create an accurate selection of your

reflective subject using the quick and easy-to-master Magic Wand tool. We'll then take you through the process of creating a clipping mask, which will enable you to combine your two captures together seamlessly. And to guarantee realistic results, you'll also be introduced to Photoshop's Transform tool and Spherize filter.

Follow along and find out how to distort any image into shape, which is perfect for when you're positioning your chosen reflection over the glass surface. We'll even cover using gradients and layer blending modes, to help ensure that the final image appears as though it has come straight from the camera, as opposed to the digital darkroom. Simply get your start images together and follow along for fantastic results in only five minutes.

Artistic reflections Steps to achieve a realistic reflection in Photoshop



Make a selection

01 Select the Magic Wand tool and create a selection of the right-hand lens. Click 'Create new layer' at the bottom of the Layers palette and go to Edit>Fill. Use Black with 100% Opacity and click OK.



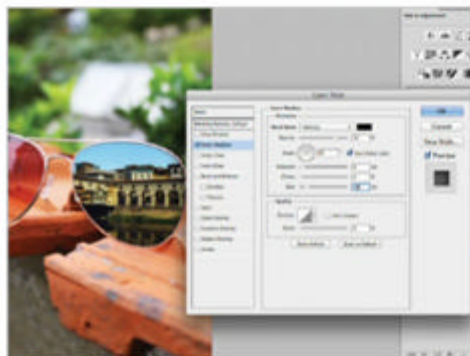
Create a clipping mask

02 Deselect and then using the Move tool, drag the second image onto your sunglasses. Right-click the new layer and select Create Clipping Mask. Go to Edit>Free Transform and scale your image down to fit.



Distort the image

03 Distort the image to the shape of the lens via Filter>Distort>Spherize. Select Horizontal for the Mode and increase Amount to 30-40%. Right-click the layer, Duplicate Layer and change the blend mode to Multiply.



Add an inner shadow

04 Add a shadow around the lens. Click on the lens layer with the black fill and select Inner Shadow from the fx menu at the bottom of the Layers palette. Input 45° Angle with a 6px Distance and 20px Size.



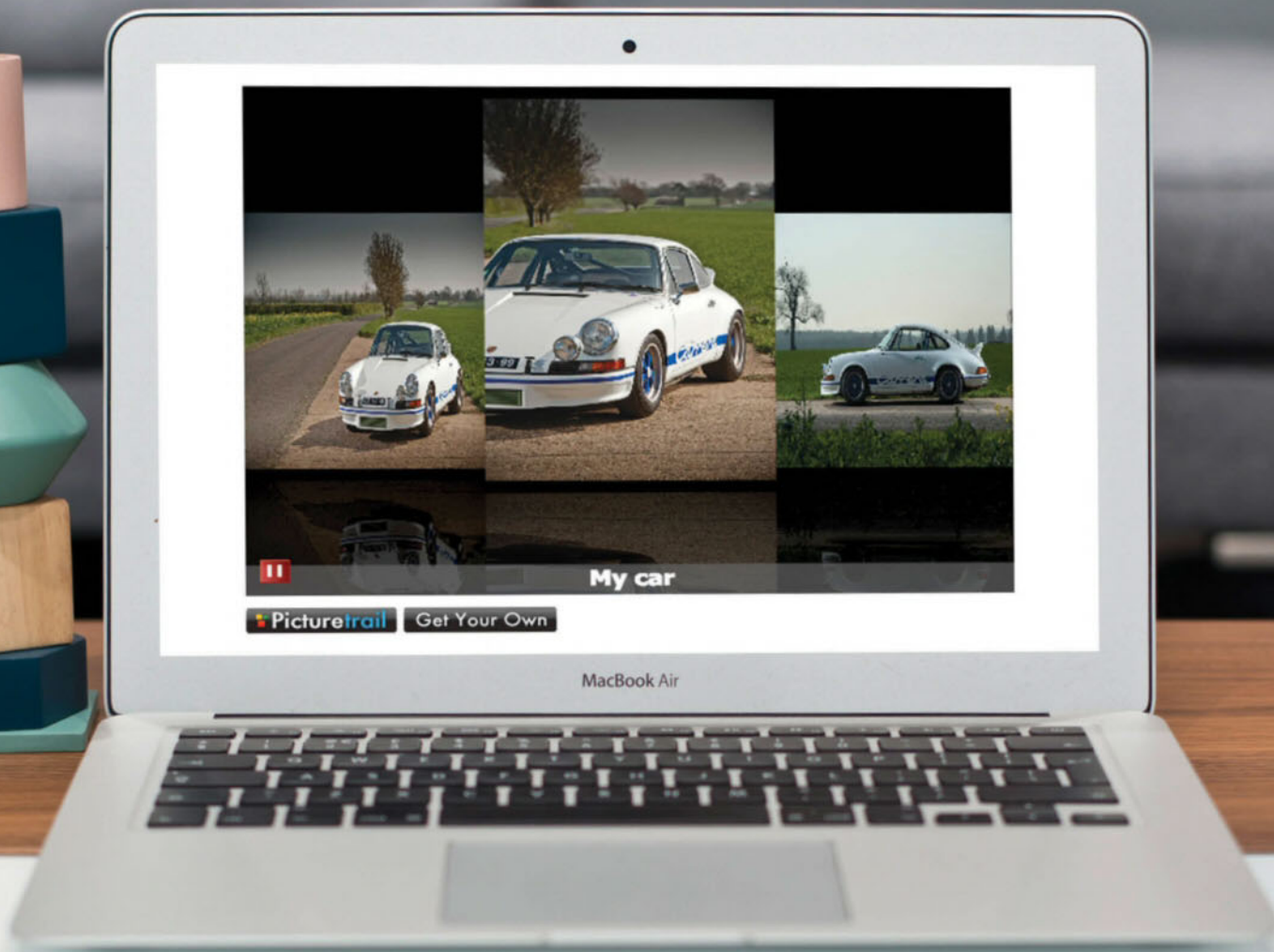
Create a highlight

05 Add a new layer and right-click for a clipping mask. Select the Gradient tool and select Foreground to Transparent, with the colour set to white. Drag a horizontal line from the top-left corner of the lens.



Repeat the process

06 Adjust the Opacity of the gradient layer so some of the image shines through. Click the original photo layer and follow the process for the left lens with the part of the image that didn't fit into the right lens.



Create Photo Flicks with PictureTrail

Produce a free online slideshow with special effects

There are plenty of ways for you to showcase your images on your website, but if you are looking for something visually different, then we have a free option to present to you.

PictureTrail is an online image hosting service, where you can create basic albums to store your photos and use the URL to embed the photos into other websites – such as blogs, social media sites, eBay, personal websites, etc. It also has an interesting feature called Photo Flicks, which takes this one step further.

A Photo Flick is an animated slideshow of your images, complete with text, effects and graphics. The default is to create shiny, bright and over-the-

top designs, which may be exactly what you're looking for. But browse the options and you will find some that look cleaner and sleeker.

When you have finished designing a slideshow, PictureTrail generates a web code that you can copy and paste into websites to host the slideshow (which uses Flash to play). You can't save your slideshow in any other manner – it's simply for online sharing.

Your Photo Flick is saved on your online account and you do need to have registered and logged in to PictureTrail to get started. There is also a PC application (no Mac version) that lets you use your Photo Flick as a screensaver on your computer.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED...

- ✓ A collection of photos
- ✓ A PictureTrail account
- ✓ Adobe Flash Player

WE USED...

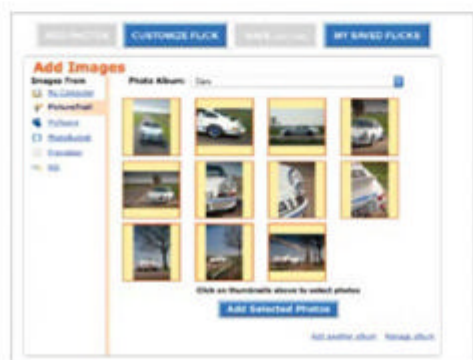
- ✓ PictureTrail Photo Flicks

YOU COULD USE...

- ✓ N/A

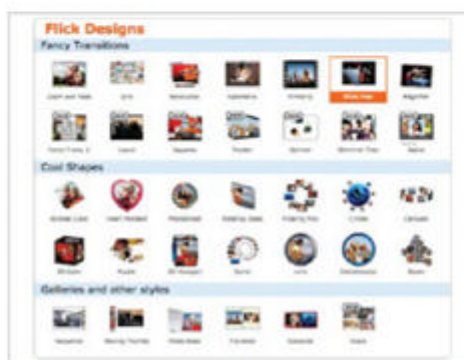
Build your Photo Flick

Turn your photos into attractive slideshows



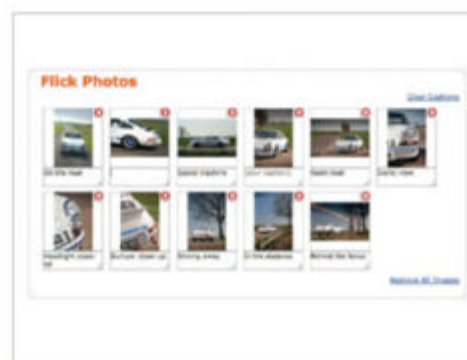
Pick your photos

01 On the PictureTrail website, you need to be logged in, then go to the Photo Flick section. Click Add Images. You can upload directly from your computer or you can pick a PictureTrail album if you have created one.



Main design

02 Your images are added to the preview slideshow, with the customisation options underneath. Scroll to the Flick Designs section and pick the look of your slideshow. They range from clean to fun to cheesy.



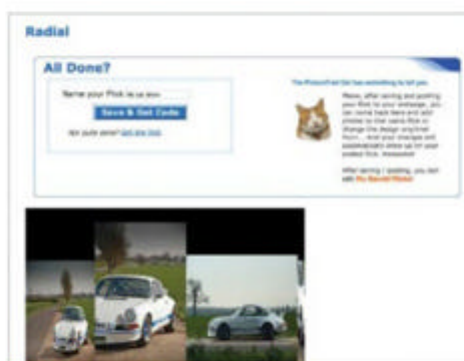
Add captions

03 Next, scroll down to the Flick Photos section, which is at the bottom of the webpage. Here you can see the images included in your slideshow. Add captions and these will appear in the video, too.



Start customising

04 With the basics sorted, go back up to the main customisation window, under the preview. Here you can choose various effects, text colour, backgrounds and more. The preview is updated as you change things.



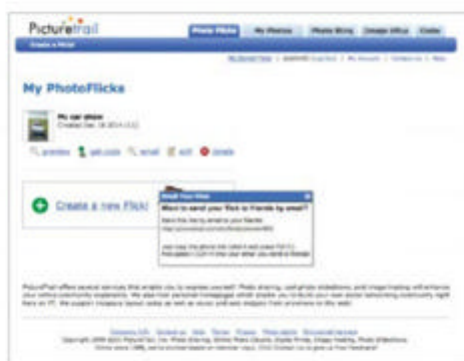
Save the Photo Flick

05 Hit the Save button and you will see this screen. Here you can name your Photo Flick. You can preview the final video first and go back and edit more if you wish. When you're happy, click Save & Get Code.



Your code

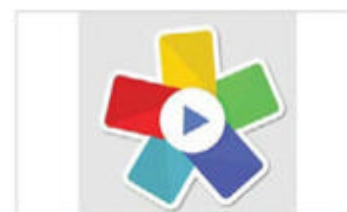
06 Once you have saved you will see your code. This is the HTML direction to your Photo Flick and you can simply copy and paste this into any of your websites to showcase your slideshow.



Share by email

07 Alternatively, use the option to send via email. Go to the Photo Flicks tab then My Saved Flicks. Under your Flick you will see 'email'. Click here and you'll get a link to copy and paste into emails.

3 OF THE BEST... Slideshow photo apps



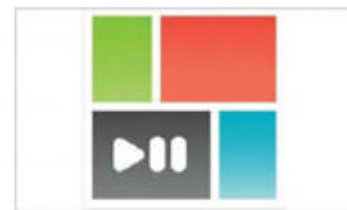
Slideshow Maker

This free Android app is effective, turning your smartphone images into attractive slideshows, letting you add text, effects and music.



Flipagram

A free app for iOS and Android letting you create slideshows using your phone's images, Facebook or Instagram – one of the best for social media.



PicPlayPost

Designed to create shareable 'stories' from your photos, videos and audio that can be shared with your friends and family. Free on iOS and Android.

SHARING

Create photo books online

Create photo books online

Use Blurb's independent publishing website to make printed or digital photo books

WHAT YOU'LL NEED...

- ✓ Computer
- ✓ Internet browser
- ✓ Photos to include

WE USED...

- ✓ MacBook Air

YOU COULD USE...

- ✓ Any computer with internet connection

There are many websites and services that help you to create photo books, which are a perfect way to display your photos.

Whether you want to make a portfolio of your work, or put together a family album, creating a book is a great way to show off your images and keep them all together in one place. Blurb is a website that lets you create eye-catching photo books in five different sizes, with a wide range of paper

and cover options available to help you customise your project.

There are four different ways to create your photo book, and the easiest way is via the online book editor, Bookify, which allows you to design a custom photo book using a pre-designed template and store your photos and projects online. For more control, you can make your own custom layouts with Blurb's downloadable book

editor, and more advanced users can use their publishing tool of choice and print a book from a PDF file.

When you use the online book app, uploading photos for your project is easy, from Facebook, Flickr and other sources. We uploaded them from our computer for the highest image quality. Unlike other sites, when you've finished your creation you can then publish it online too.

Add the images

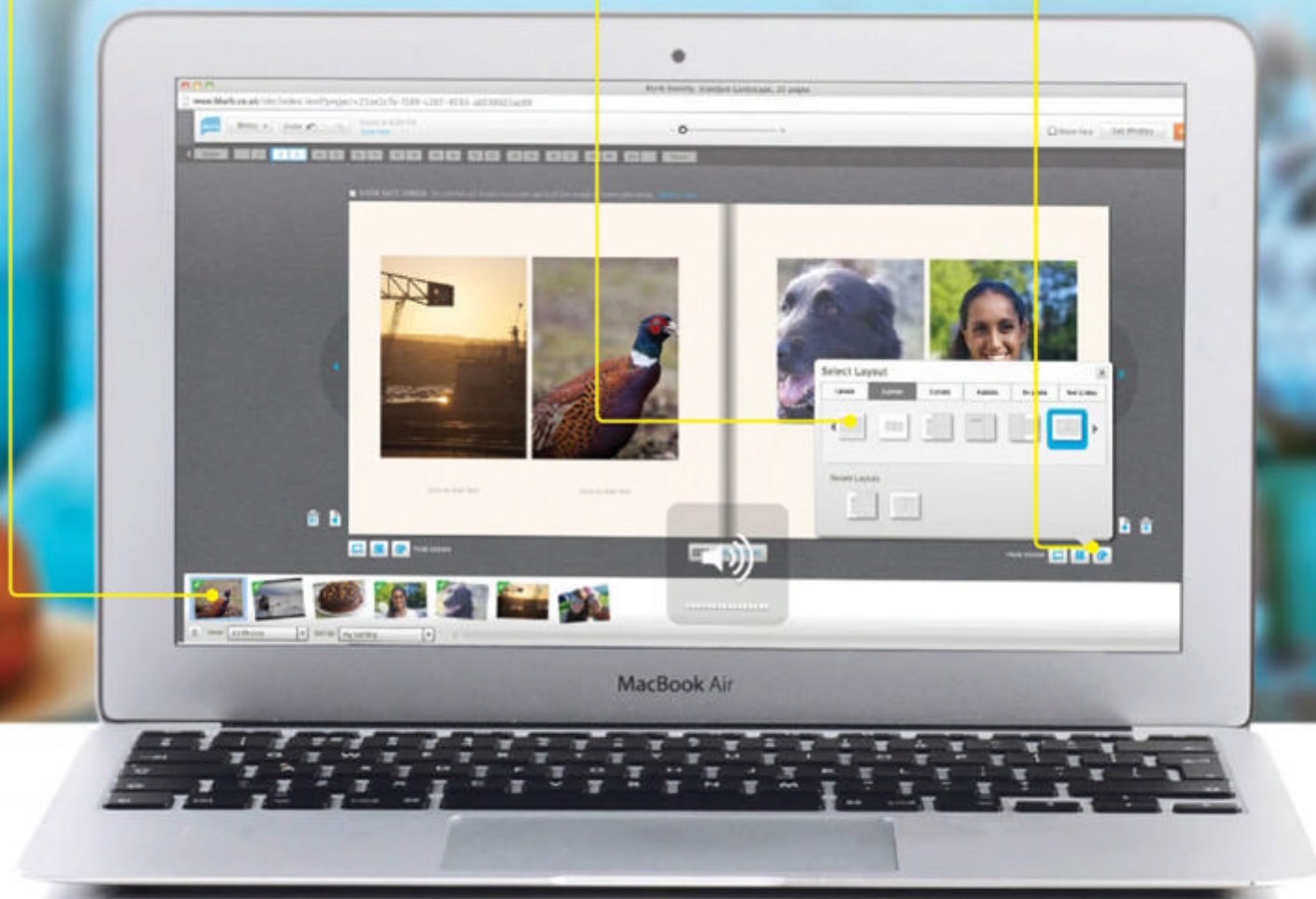
You can quickly add photos to each page by dragging and dropping your uploaded shots from the bottom bar

Alter the layout

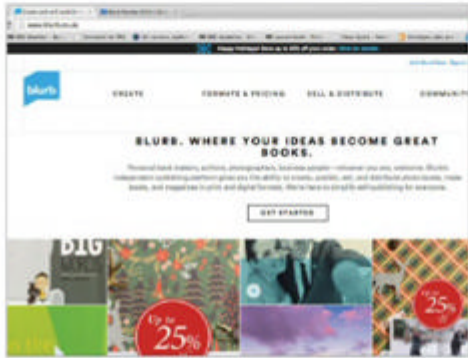
It's easy to change the layout of your pages, depending on how many photos you want to include

Presentation choices

Selecting the palette icon allows you to change the page's background colour and border

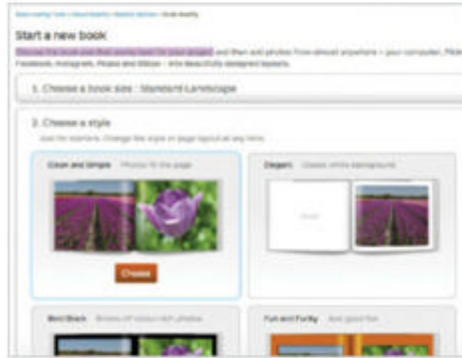


Print your photos Use Blurb to design a book



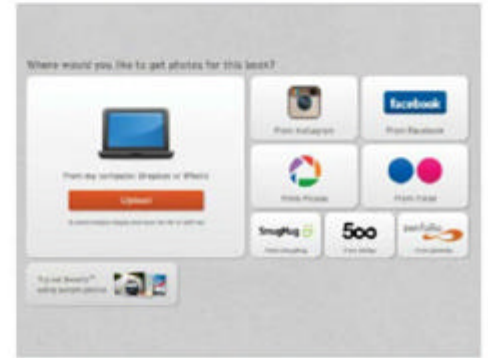
Get started

01 When you visit the Blurb website, click 'Get started' to see the list of options for creating your book. We suggest selecting 'Make a book online' to start the process, as it's fast and easy for simple projects.



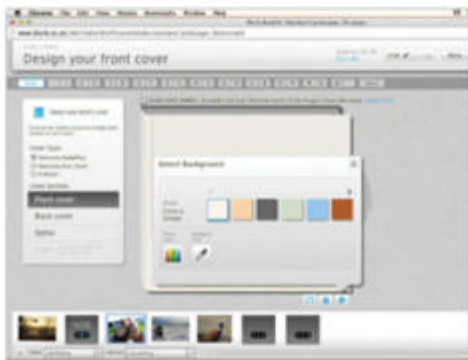
Choose options

02 Select the book size and style from the drop-down menus. Don't worry if you're not sure, as you'll be able to change the page layout after this point. Bookify will open after you click Choose.



Find images

03 Upload the photos to appear in the book, either from your computer or a social media account. We recommend clicking Upload to get images from your computer to ensure that they are the highest quality.



Make it personal

04 While you wait for your images to upload, select your cover type from the menu on the left. You can then add titles and choose the background colour. Select Next Page to begin the inside.



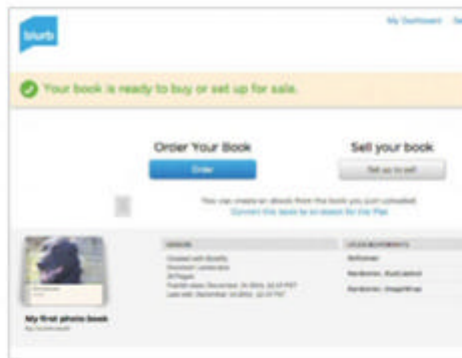
Create the inside

05 Select a layout for each page, then drag and drop your uploaded images to where you want them. We recommend that you tick Show Help from the top menu if you're unsure what each button does.



Manage pages

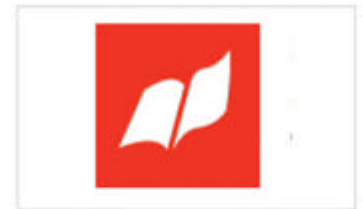
06 When you've finished, go to Manage Pages for an overview of your book. Select and delete any blank pages. Next, click Preview and Order in the top-right corner. You'll then be prompted to make an account.



Publish your book

07 After signing in, your book will be saved to your private bookstore, ready to buy or set up for sale. Click Order to complete the process, choosing the paper you want it to be printed on, then adding it to your cart.

3 OF THE BEST... Photo book providers



Bob Books

Unlike Blurb, you can choose to have the pages lie flat when the book is opened. You'll need to download a program to create your book.



Albelli

You can create a book online of up to 70 pages, or use the downloadable software to a maximum of 120 pages, and there's a wide range of sizes.



Photoleaf

The downloadable design software is easy to use, if a little more basic than Blurb's. There are extra options for printing on thick paper.

ask the team


Contact us with your questions at pfbteam@imagine-publishing.co.uk

How can I brighten up my shot?

I recently took this shot at my local zoo, but the foreground looks a little dark. I've tried brightening it up, but then the background looks really blown out. Is there a way I can create a more balanced exposure?

[Marie Clarke, Email](#)

When your subject is backlit it can be difficult to keep them well exposed, because your camera will often select settings based on the bright background and leave the foreground in shadow. Simply adjusting the brightness will affect the entire image, but there is a clever editing trick that you can use to enhance a specific section of your shot. Follow our simple steps to become a master of layer masks.

 **Photo needs rescuing?**
Email it to our experts
pfbteam@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Dark foreground

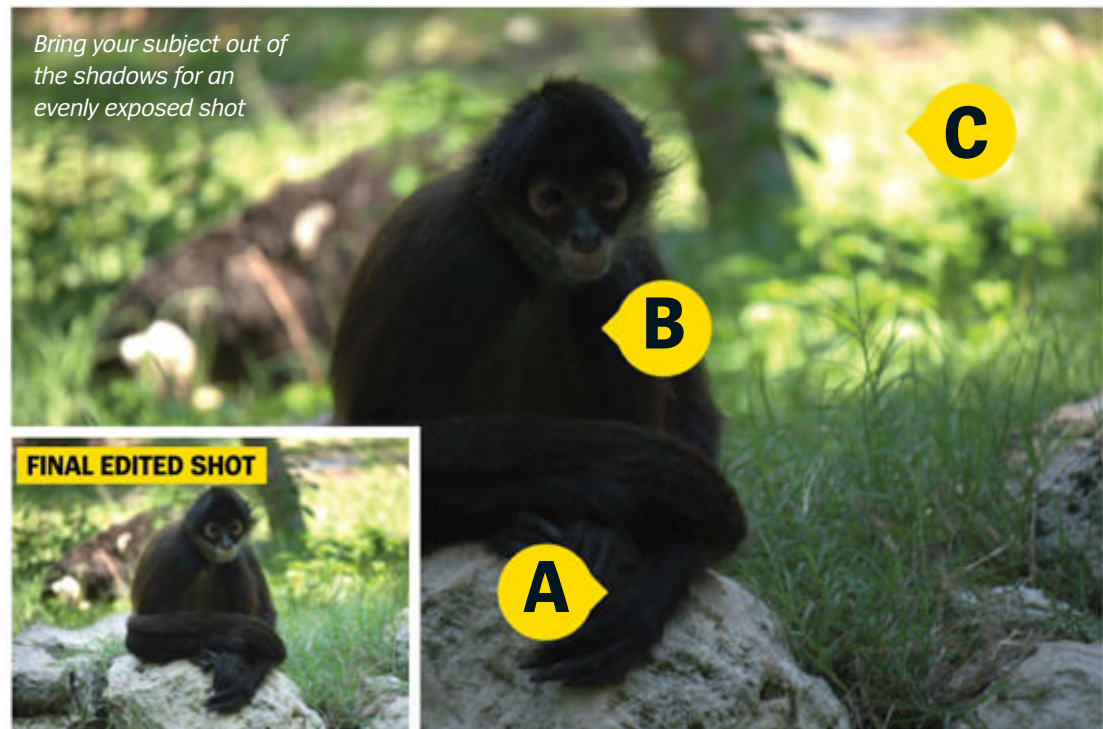
A *In an attempt to keep the background well exposed, the camera has underexposed the subject in the foreground*

Lost detail

B *Because the subject is underexposed, lots of important detail and texture is lost in the dark shadows*

Bright background

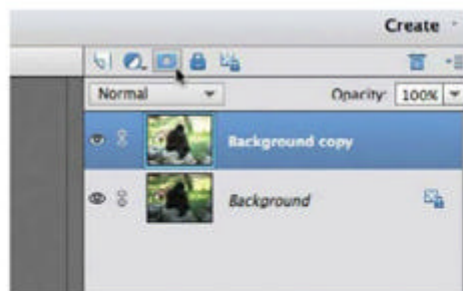
C *The background is already quite bright, and so brightening it further will just result in even greater loss of detail*



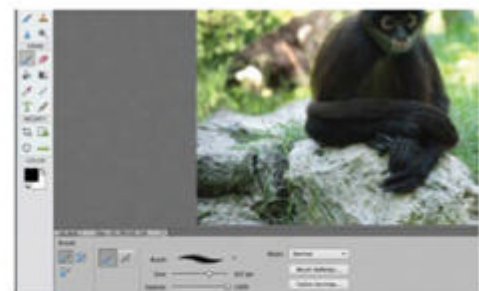
Brighten your shot Rescue detail from the shadows



01 Brighten it up
Go to Layer>Duplicate Layer and then Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Brightness/Contrast. Adjust the brightness until you are happy.



02 Add a layer mask
In the Layers palette, click on the Add Layer Mask icon at the top. You should see a white thumbnail appear next to the top layer.



03 Darken the background
Select the Brush tool, set the colour to black and Opacity to 100%. Now brush over the background to reveal the well-exposed layer.

3 OF THE BEST...

Tips for taking an evenly exposed shot



01 Use spot metering

To set the exposure settings for your main subject, select Spot Metering mode. It will measure the light for wherever you focus to keep that area well exposed.



02 Fire your flash

To fill in the shadows and illuminate your backlit subject, fire your flash. For more flattering results, bounce the light off a piece of white paper, or diffuse it through translucent paper.



03 Try HDR

HDR photography involves combining shots of different exposures into one evenly exposed image. Some cameras have an exposure bracketing function, or an HDR mode.



How can I get into my shots?

I love taking photos of my friends and family, but because I'm always the one behind the camera, I never get to be in the photos. I'd love some shots of all of us together so that I can frame them on my wall or get them printed. Is there a way that I can take the photo and be in it too?

[Laura Martin, Facebook](#)

Obviously getting behind the lens is the best way to improve your photography skills, but

sometimes it's nice to get in front of it, too. When you're on holiday or at a family occasion, it's good to have a record to show that you were actually there and not just a shadowy figure behind the lens! The good news is that including yourself in your photos is very easy. You could simply point the camera towards you and hold it out at arm's length, which is good for selfies. However, if you are photographing a group, it's often difficult to fit everyone else in the shot (unless you have crazy long arms!). Let us show you a better technique.

All-inclusive shots Be part of the picture



Use a tripod

In order to shoot hands-free you will need to do a bit of preparation, namely to secure the camera to a tripod or rest it on a sturdy surface in front of you.



Set the timer

With the camera nice and steady, select self-timer mode and choose a time delay if you have the option. A few seconds should give you enough time to get into position.



Take the shot

Fire the shutter and scoot round into the shot. It may take a few attempts to frame it right, unless you have a flip-out screen to help you, but that will all become part of the fun.



Post your photo to our Facebook page and we'll share it with the world
Search for 'PFBMag'



Craig Radcliffe
We love how the sailboat is silhouetted against the colourful sunset sky



Ken Dobbie
All you need to shoot the moon is a long zoom and you too can get shots like this



Leah Eastman
Pets make great models when you are practicing your photography skills



Wasim Sk
The intricate details of flowers are great subjects for macro shots

Turn a simple portrait into a vibrant pop art grid



How can I create pop art?

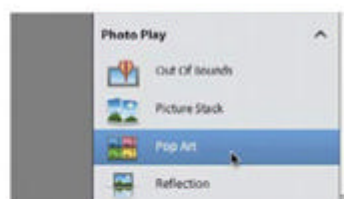
I have some great photos of my friend and I would really love to turn them into a funky pop art print that I can give to her as a present. Is there an easy way to do this?

[Jodie Marshall, Facebook](#)

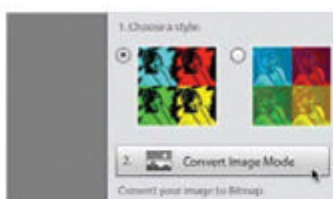
Giving your shots a pop art effect is a great way to create fun images with lots of bright colour. For

the best results, you need a photo with a clear main subject and a simple backdrop. To create a pop art image manually, you need to convert it to Bitmap mode, which strips away the colour and leaves a basic outline of your subject. Then you add your own choice of bright colour. Luckily, though, Photoshop Elements has a handy mode that lets you create a pop art grid in just a few clicks.

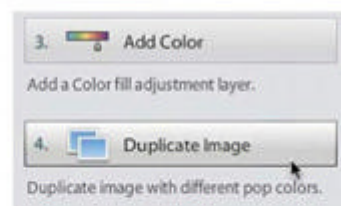
Create a pop art effect Have some fun with Photoshop Elements' Guided mode



Choose Pop Art mode
Open your image in Photoshop Elements, then select the Guided tab at the top of the screen. Next, choose the Pop Art option from the Photo Play menu to the right.



Convert the mode
Select a pop art style from the two options given, then click on the Convert Image Mode button to reduce the subject of your shot to a simple outline.



Colour and duplicate
Clicking the Add Color button will apply a bright background colour to your shot. To create a grid of different coloured pop art images, click on the Duplicate Image button.

Get to know your camera in 5 minutes

Your quick-start guide to help you master your kit now

CAMERA ICONS EXPLAINED

Choose the correct setting with this guide

- Delete – found on all cameras
- Playback – use to review photos
- Flash – choose to switch on/off
- Flash off – the flash won't fire
- Zoom in on your photos
- Zoom out of your photos
- Drive modes, including Burst
- Metering modes
- W** Zooms lens out for wide-angles
- T** Zooms lens in for close-ups
- Exposure compensation
- Video mode on stills cameras
- Self-timer for self-portraits
- Image stabilisation
- Fn** Function button – for shortcuts
- Diameter of lens – found on barrel
- Macro or close-up modes
- Night-time/low-light scenes

Program

Easily customise things like ISO and white balance

Landscape

Boosts the saturation in blues and greens for really vivid shots

Auto

Let your camera do the hard work for you in Automatic mode

Sports

Uses a fast shutter speed to capture blur-free movement

Aperture Priority

Select the aperture while the camera picks the shutter speed for you

Shutter Priority

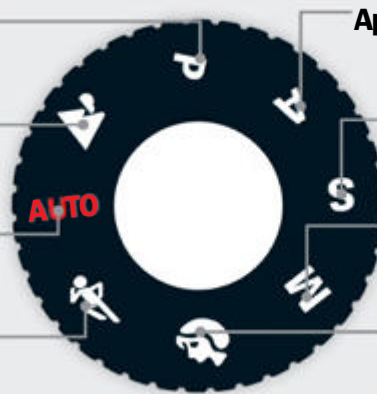
Select just the shutter speed in this mode

Manual

Take control in this mode and pick your own settings

Portrait

For super-flattering people shots with blurry backgrounds



Change your lens

How to remove and attach lenses



Remove the lens

01 Remove the old lens by pressing the button next to it and then gently twisting the lens anti-clockwise to unscrew it.



Line it up

02 Remove the new lens's rear cap and then line up the red or white markings on the lens and camera body.



Fix in place

03 Once lined up, twist the lens clockwise until you hear a click telling you that it has locked into place.

JARGON BUSTER

Aperture: Affects the amount of your image that is in focus – the 'depth of field'

CSC: Compact System Camera

DSLR: Digital single-lens reflex camera

Drive mode: Continuous or Burst mode, single shot and self-timer

Dynamic range: The term used to refer to the amount of detail present in the highlights and shadows

Exposure: A balanced exposure has detail in light and shadow areas alike

Exposure compensation: Adjusts the tonal range of your photo, lighter or darker

Focal lengths: Wide-angle – a wider-angle of view than normal, eg 28mm. Telephoto – a magnified view of subjects in the distance, such as 200mm

Focus: Autofocus means your camera focuses for you; Manual puts you in control

ISO: Refers to how sensitive your camera's sensor is to light. ISO also affects the visible grain, or 'noise', in a photo

LCD: The display screen on the rear of the camera used to compose images

Live View: An electronic view of the scene in front of the lens

Metering: Refers to the way the camera reads the light in the scene

Megapixels: Number of pixels on the sensor, in millions

Noise: Refers to the visible digital grain in a photograph

Shutter speed: Fast speeds freeze action, while longer ones blur any motion

Viewfinder: Optical – shows you the view through the camera lens and is good for accurate framing. Electronic – shows the view on an LCD in the viewfinder

White balance: Affected by the ambient light, the white balance can be altered to ensure a natural colour result

Zoom: Optical – the magnification provided by the camera lens. Digital – a camera crop factor

UPGRADE

Pentax XG-1

We rate the camera with a big zoom and small price

£279/\$350 | 52x optical zoom | 1cm Macro mode | 16 megapixels



BUY THIS IF...
you want an affordable camera to develop your skills with

DOES THIS CAMERA HAVE ANY CREATIVE OPTIONS?

There are a whopping 20 creative filter effects on the XG-1. As well as the typical Fisheye and Partial Colour, you can also opt for the more unusual Japan Style or Punk. Oddly these aren't accessible in Auto mode, but can still be applied in Playback.



Left

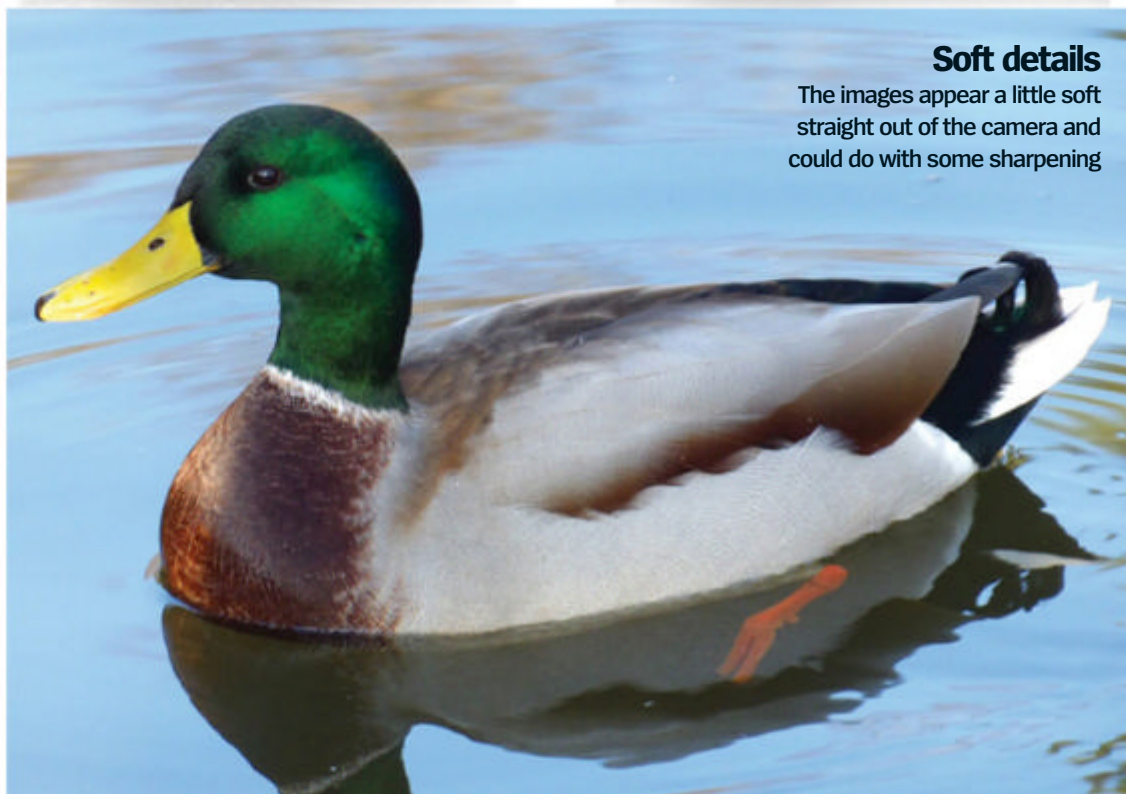
Small scale DSLR

The Pentax XG-1 has the appearance of a mini-DSLR, with a big lens and chunky grip for a secure hold

Right

Big buttons

Although some of their functions aren't initially obvious, the buttons are a good size and easy enough to access for any photographer



Soft details

The images appear a little soft straight out of the camera and could do with some sharpening

TECHNICAL INFO

Megapixels 16MP

A perfect amount of pixels for both web uploads and large prints

Zoom 52x optical, 4x digital

An extensive focal range of 24-1248mm for shooting any scene with ease

Shutter speed 30-1/2000sec

Adequate for freezing fast-paced action and shooting in low light

ISO sensitivity 100-3200

A decent range for boosting the sensitivity when shooting at night

Exp. modes 13 scenes, plus Auto, Program, Manual, AP and SP

Plenty of control for beginners looking to learn and progress their skills

Aperture f2.8-5.6

Flash modes FOff, FOn, Auto, SS, RE

Weight 567g with battery

Dimensions 89x119x97.5mm

Batteries Lithium-ion

Storage SD, SDHC, Eye-Fi, 15.4MB internal memory

Screen 3 inches

HOW GOOD IS IT FOR...

Landscapes ★★★★★

No panorama mode, but enough can be included in the frame at 24mm

Portraits ★★★★★

Face Beautifier mode and in-camera retouching make for perfect shots

Sports ★★★★★

Shoot 4.7 frames per second at full resolution to capture the action

Low light ★★★★★

Handheld night mode only takes small images but noise is handled well

Macro ★★★★★

You can focus from just 1cm away but only when fully zoomed out

THE PROS & CONS

👍 52x optical zoom provides impressive reach

👍 Plenty of modes for beginners to explore

👎 LCD and EVF are unfortunately low resolution

👎 The flash seems way too eager to fire

In the battle of the budget superzooms, the Pentax XG-1 certainly gains points for its impressive zoom reach. The 52x optical zoom is ideal for a big range of shooting scenarios, from wide-angle landscapes to close-ups of distant subjects. It can even take close-ups of objects right in front of the lens, from just 1cm away to be exact, thanks to Macro mode. However, this only really works if you are fully zoomed out, so isn't particularly useful for photographing insects as you'll need to get so close that you'll probably scare them away.

Nevertheless, focusing is impressively quick and Shake Reduction works well to keep images steady at full zoom. Unfortunately the camera isn't quite as quick to initially turn on, as it takes a good few seconds to spring to life. The LCD screen and electronic viewfinder are also both quite low resolution, with disappointing colour and contrast accuracy when framing the scene. Another annoyance is the pop-up flash, which is overly eager to spring into action in Auto mode. Of course, you can switch flash modes, but when in Auto it will

automatically switch back again every time you turn the camera off and on again.

Finding your way around the settings isn't clear at first, as some of the button's functions aren't obvious. You have to press the exposure value icon in order to change aperture, for instance. However, there is plenty to explore. As well as manual modes, there is a great array of scene modes. For example, handheld night mode combines several frames for a crisper low-light image, but it does only create an 8MP image. The same goes for HDR mode, which is disappointing as it actually improves exposure and image detail in high-contrast situations.

Overall, image quality is impressive, with great detail and true-to-life colours and noise doesn't become a problem until ISO 1600.

Although it has a few annoying flaws, the Pentax XG-1 offers users great image quality and a lot of useful features for a small price.

VERDICT ★★★★★

UPGRADE
Panasonic LUMIX LX100

Panasonic LUMIX LX100

Get fully manual controls in a really small body

£649/\$900 | 12.8MP | f1.7-2.8 Leica lens | RAW & JPEG

**BUY
THIS IF...**
you want to
ease yourself
into shooting
manually



WHO IS THIS CAMERA AIMED AT?

With so many features and manual settings, it's easy to assume that this camera is made for advanced users. However, all of the manual settings can be put into automatic, so anyone that wants to develop their manual skills can.



Left

Size matters

For a compact camera, the Panasonic LUMIX LX100 isn't the most pocketable system

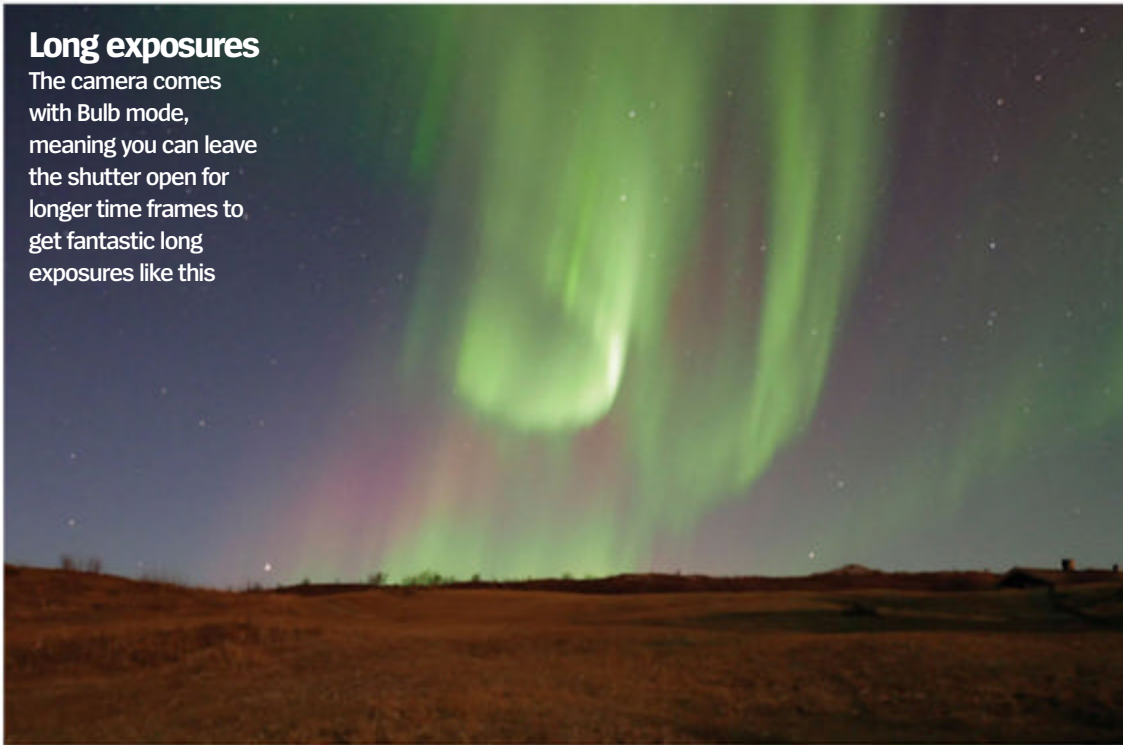
Right

Menu mayhem

The LX100 boasts plenty of features, but the buttons and dials can seem overwhelming for beginners

Long exposures

The camera comes with Bulb mode, meaning you can leave the shutter open for longer time frames to get fantastic long exposures like this



Renowned for its range of top-quality compacts, Panasonic has hit the nail on the head again with the LUMIX LX100. On paper it's hard to fault. Featuring a Micro 4/3" MOS sensor, a fast, versatile lens and a sturdy build, Panasonic's release offers plenty of creative potential for newcomers.

On top of that, the LX100 boasts a host of extras, from image filters to 4K video capabilities. Thanks to its large sensor and the easy-to-access switch on the lens barrel, it's possible to alternate between aspect ratios for both stills and movies.

Sadly the abundance of settings means the LX100 isn't the kind of camera you can pick up and use straight out of the box, and the number of buttons on the body can seem a little overwhelming. The LX100 is uncomfortably slow, too. Toggling the zoom takes time, and on test we found that the camera often took several seconds to switch off.

There's no faulting the build quality, however. With a solid metal body and matching dials, the LX100 is built to last. The Leica lens lives up to its creator's reputation; when working with an aperture of f1.7-2.8, images have a lovely blurred background.

With so many features on the camera body, however, you'd expect there to be some kind of locking mechanism. No such luck. It's easy to knock the settings out of place, so it's something to be wary of when using on the move.

On a desktop, test shots were bright and printed well, though the Auto white balance tended to give a slightly cold colour cast. This is easy to fix with the camera's in-camera RAW editor, though.

The LX100 does struggle with low-light situations. When you crank up the ISO, noise becomes noticeable at ISO 1600, and autofocus becomes slow and unreliable.

The Panasonic LUMIX LX100 is well equipped for both novices and veterans. It's a great springboard for those looking to work manually, and while it's not cheap, it certainly doesn't skimp on features.

With a large sensor, the LX100 promises quality. Resulting images are certainly good, but sadly it's not an intuitive system for beginners

VERDICT ★★★★★

TECHNICAL INFO

Megapixels 12.8MP

A decent MP count for a sensor of this size that will produce decent prints

Zoom 3.1x optical

The LX100 provides a modest zoom range that's equivalent to 24-75mm

Shutter speed B, 60-1/16000sec

Ideal to get to grips with both long exposures and action images

ISO sensitivity A, 100-25600

A decent range, but when working with high levels, noise can be destructive

Exp. modes 7 scenes, P, A, S, M, 22 filters

There are plenty of default settings suited to both newcomers and advanced users alike

Aperture f1.7-2.8

Flash modes Bundled external flash: Auto, RE, FOn, FOff, SS

Weight 393g with battery

Dimensions 114.8x66.2x55mm

Batteries Lithium-ion

Storage SD, SDHC, SDXC

Screen 3 inches

HOW GOOD IS IT FOR...

Landscapes ★★★★★

Colours could be more saturated, but in-camera RAW editing may help

Portraits ★★★★★

The range of creative filters add mood and character to portraits

Sports ★★★★★

With a fast lens and a speedy shutter, the LX100 captures crisp motion shots

Low light ★★★★★

Test shots were fine, but the camera struggled to focus in dim lighting

Macro ★★★★★

With a dedicated macro AF switch, you can focus as close as 3cm

THE PROS & CONS

- ✔ Plenty of creative effects and settings
- ✔ It's built to endure knocks and drops
- ✘ A locking switch would've been a welcome addition
- ✘ Colours could certainly do with more impact

Kit essentials

Improve your photography with this selection of fun yet functional accessories

1 Lowepro Photo Traveler 150

Price **£57/\$50**

Lowepro's (www.lowepro.com) camera backpack unzips all the way round for quick access to gear, and the compact size will suit many outdoor enthusiasts. The strap height is easy to adjust, but the boxy design might be uncomfortable when you carry heavy loads. Inside the bag there are many moveable Velcro dividers, and you can fit a semi-pro DSLR, small zoom, flash gun and accessories. In the easy-access front pocket, there's also a padded compartment for carrying and protecting a tablet-sized computer. This smart bag is good quality and feels durable, but it's a real shame it doesn't have a waterproof cover. The price isn't unreasonable, but you might find a similarly priced messenger bag more comfortable and roomier.



2 Manfrotto Mini PIXI tripod Price **£25/\$25**

When you want a tripod that's truly portable, the PIXI tripod from Manfrotto (www.manfrotto.co.uk) is an easy way to keep your camera stable. Though very light, it can support a maximum of 1kg, and is particularly suited for use with compact cameras and mobile phones. The push-button mechanism should enable you to position and lock the ball head in one swift movement, however it's

incredibly stiff to move. The attractive stainless steel body feels hard-wearing, coming in four colour-ways, with rubber grips on the bottom of the feet. If you close the legs, the PIXI can be used as a grip to capture video footage, or stills from high up. This a well-priced mini tripod.



3 Phottix 80cm Light Tent Cube Soft Box Price £60 (approx \$94)

Setting up a tabletop studio at home can be made much simpler using a light tent, and this large Phottix model (www.phottix.com) comes with four coloured background cloths to complement the object inside. These are kept in place with Velcro fasteners, and they attach easily and stay firmly in place. This cube soft box is made from a photographic nylon fabric, which

works well to diffuse external light and soften shadows. There's even a front door cover with camera slit, for greater control over the lighting. Once you've finished using the product, it collapses down quickly into a flat portable carrying bag, and the high price is more than offset by the large size. ★★★★★

03
phottix[®]
graphy Specialists



4 Mastering Exposure Price £15/\$20

This guide is packed full of diagrams to help you understand the essentials behind exposure, and it's written as an easy-to-follow walkthrough course. There are 176 full colour pages, split into chapters that cover technical considerations, to night scenes and flash photography. Each of the subjects include a comprehensive explanation that's enjoyable to read, but some images look

dated. Though the book's author understands that readers might have basic knowledge, this would be a valuable resource for any photographer who wants to refresh their techniques. The paperback format of this book makes it easy to hold, and you can find out more at www.ilexpress.com. ★★★★★

Photography for beginners

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